

House Committee on Appropriations  
Subcommittee on Commerce, Justice, Science, and Related Agencies  
Outside Witness Testimony

**Fiscal Year 2023 Appropriations**  
**Statement of Jeffrey Deluca, graduate of Lackawanna County, Pennsylvania Drug Court**  
**Scranton, PA**

**On behalf of the National Association of Drug Court Professionals**  
**requesting funding for the Department of Justice, Office of Justice Programs**  
**May 12, 2022**

Chairman Cartwright, Ranking Member Aderholt, and distinguished members of the subcommittee, I am honored to have the opportunity to submit my testimony on behalf of 1.5 million graduates of treatment court programs and the 150,000 people treatment court programs will connect to lifesaving substance use and mental health treatment this year alone. Given the ongoing substance use crisis, I am requesting that Congress provide funding of \$95 million for the Drug Court Discretionary Grant Program and \$29 million for the Veterans Treatment Court Grant Program at the Department of Justice for fiscal year 2023.

I am writing to you today as a son, brother, military veteran, taxpayer, and grateful treatment court graduate. I also serve as a certified recovery specialist for the Treatment Court Advocacy Center in Scranton, Pennsylvania. A few years ago, I was in a cell facing 14 years in prison for crimes connected to my opioid and methamphetamine addiction. I had lost everything, including my family and a six-figure salaried job. Despite being incarcerated on nine other occasions, and several stints in treatment, nothing worked to change my behavior. I was convinced I had no future. My life forever changed the day the Judge gave me an opportunity to participate in veterans treatment court.

Starting the program was scary. When I was in jail or rehab, I knew it was only a matter of time before I got out and could go back to my old ways. But in treatment court, I had to confront my addiction and be accountable to myself, the treatment court team, and my community. I quickly learned to trust the multidisciplinary team, which includes not only a veterans justice outreach specialist from the Department of Veterans Affairs, but also case managers, treatment providers, and counselors. Together, we created a plan to ensure I received the treatment I needed, all while under close supervision. Receiving treatment for my addiction was only part of the process. Because sustained, long-term recovery is the goal, treatment court helped me address issues and bad relationships that had been impacting my behavior for years.

Upon graduating from treatment court, I dedicated myself to repairing the damage I caused by giving to others what was given to me. I am proud to serve as a certified recovery specialist and offer peer support to people in Lackawanna County who struggle as I once did; I watch them transform and triumph as they overcome substance use disorders and once again become productive members of our community. But I'm also seeing the grip that the substance use

epidemic still has on society. Treatment courts, such as drug courts and veterans treatment courts, offer a public health and public safety solution to this crisis.

I'm not alone in my experience; there is overwhelming empirical evidence showing the effectiveness of these programs. The Government Accountability Office has concluded the drug court model reduces crime by up to 58%. The Department of Justice conducted a Multi-Site Adult Drug Court Evaluation that confirmed these courts significantly reduce both drug use and crime and have a cost savings averaging \$6,000 for every individual served. Additional benefits include improved employment, housing, and financial stability, as well as reduced foster care placements. Veterans treatment courts expand on the drug court model to include veteran justice outreach specialists from the VA, volunteer veteran mentors from the community, and numerous other veteran-specific local, state, and federal resources. It is critical that we have interventions like veterans treatment court in place to ensure veterans like me receive the treatment and support they need if they struggle like I did.

It's hard to believe that I'm the same man who had to be shaken awake in the middle of a traffic stop because he was so beat up from long-term drug use. For years, I stayed away from my family in a feeble attempt to shield them from my addiction. At one point, I was living in a camper in a near-stranger's backyard and had a warrant out for my arrest in three Pennsylvania counties. It felt inevitable that my addiction-fueled crimes would catch up with me. When they finally did, I stood in court and told the judge to "get on with it." I was ready to give up. But treatment court wouldn't give up on me.

I'm happy to say I'm not alone in my success; as I mentioned earlier, treatment courts have reunited thousands of families by connecting those with substance use and/or mental health disorders with treatment options best suited to them, including medication for addiction treatment when deemed appropriate by a medical provider. Together, the court team offers the tools to overcome substance use disorder and past trauma to create meaningful, healthy relationships.

Continued support from the Drug Court Discretionary Grant Program at the Department of Justice ensures the nearly 4,000 treatment courts in the United States today provide critical services to save lives. But we know there are many more who still need this opportunity. I strongly urge this committee to recommend funding of \$95 million to the Drug Court Discretionary Grant Program and \$29 million to the Veterans Treatment Court Grant Program in fiscal year 2023, so people like me can continue to receive lifesaving services, and families can continue to be reunited.