



PATRICK TESTIN

STATE SENATOR

DATE: January 11th, 2018
RE: **Testimony on 2017 Senate Bill 473**
TO: The Senate Committee on Judiciary and Public Safety
FROM: Senator Patrick Testin

Thank you to Chairman Wanggaard and members of the committee for accepting my testimony on Senate Bill 473, which creates an alert for missing veterans with a service-related health condition.

Serving in the military is a sacrifice that can lead to the development of a service-related health condition. Far too often, this has the potential to end in suicide. Though veterans account for only nine percent of the U.S. population, they make up nineteen percent of all suicides in the country.

Senate Bill 473 would create a "Green Alert" through the integrated crime alert network for veterans considered to be at-risk due to a service-related health condition. This bill provides additional tools to law enforcement that will help them respond to an at-risk veteran's disappearance with a greater urgency and places emphasis on the risk of suicide for veterans with a service-related condition.

Senator Johnson brought this legislation to my attention following the tragic death of Milwaukee Air Force veteran, Corey Adams. Though Corey had been missing for days, the at-risk nature of his condition was not taken fully into account, and his disappearance was not seen as critical for eight days. His death was eventually discovered eighteen days after his initial disappearance.

Implementing a "Green Alert" is necessary to ensure that at-risk veteran disappearances are given high priority. Given the success of both the Amber and Silver Alert systems, expanding the program to include those who served and are at-risk, would be highly worthwhile.

Senator Johnson and I have introduced an amendment in order to clarify the procedure tasked to the Department of Justice. This amendment simply adds more technical detail to the procedure of law enforcement for the initiation of a "Green Alert," and removes a training requirement that was deemed outside the scope of the department's expertise. With the amendment, the Department of Justice has indicated that they are in support of the bill.

Our veterans have continuously sacrificed in their service to our nation. Creating a "Green Alert" is a simple way to prevent more tragedies and get our veterans home safely.

Thank you again Chairman and committee members for listening to my testimony today and for your consideration of Senate Bill 473.



STATE SENATOR **LaTonya Johnson**

WISCONSIN STATE SENATE

6TH DISTRICT

Senate Committee on Judiciary and Public Safety

Testimony on 2017 Senate Bill 473

January 11, 2018

Chairman Wanggaard and members of the committee, thank you for holding a hearing on SB 473.

Corey Adams lived in the 6th Senate District and his family, who are here today, brought this issue to our attention. We believe that this bill is a common-sense response to the tragic reality that we are losing veterans to suicide at a shocking rate.

According to the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA), 20 veterans commit suicide each day. While veterans make up less than 9 percent of the U.S. population, they account for 19 percent of all suicides in America.

On March 20, 2017, Corey Adams went missing in Milwaukee after he missed an appointment with the VA. Corey was a veteran of the U.S. Air Force, having served four years on active duty and 18 years in the Air Force Reserves, including with the 440th Airlift Wing, based at Fort Bragg, North Carolina. Corey was diagnosed with PTSD and bipolar disorder in 2014 following his last tour in the Middle East.

When Corey went missing, his family knew that something was wrong—Corey had left his eyeglasses, phone, money, and medications at his parent's home, where he was last seen. Despite his family filing a missing person report within hours of his disappearance, it took eight days before he was determined to meet the critical missing criteria by Milwaukee police.

On April 7th, 18 days after his initial disappearance, Corey Adams' body was recovered from a pond in Dineen Park, just one mile from his mother's home. We believe that this outcome could have been avoided if the public had been enlisted in the search for Corey sooner.

If a soldier goes missing in the field, his or her unit will send out a search and rescue party. And so, when an at-risk veteran goes missing at home, it should be all of our jobs to assist with the search however we can.

We all share a duty to those who put their lives on the line to defend our country, and Green Alerts, like the current system of Amber and Silver Alerts, will help fulfill that duty by giving us, the public, the opportunity to be on the lookout and help bring our missing veterans home safely.

Once again, thank you for allowing me to testify today and for your consideration of this bipartisan, common-sense legislation. I would also like to thank Rep. Kleefisch and Sen. Testin for their work on this bill.