

Testimony of Robin Cody, RN

Before the Joint Public Hearing of the House Intergovernmental Affairs & Operations
Committee and the House Veterans Affairs & Emergency Preparedness Committee

November 17, 2025

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Good Morning Committee Chairmen, Representatives, Distinguished Guests, and fellow  
veteran advocates.

It is my distinct honor and privilege to speak with you this morning about a topic that is  
deeply personal for me: veteran access to the Stellate Ganglion Block for the treatment of  
PTSD. I am an Army and Air Force veteran, a nurse, and a grateful recipient of the Stellate  
Ganglion Block.

In 1995, my former husband and I were newly married and living in a community  
immediately outside the main gate at Camp Lejeune, North Carolina. While deployed to the  
Mediterranean, he and his fellow Marines received significant media attention when they  
were part of a TRAP team that rescued Air Force pilot Scott O'Grady who had been shot  
down in Bosnia. The identities of the Marines on the TRAP team were widely disseminated  
and it was reported that they wouldn't be returning home from the deployment for many  
more months. Shortly thereafter, an intruder broke into our home in the middle of the night  
while I was sleeping and sexually assaulted me. When targeting me as a young,  
presumably defenseless, Marine Corps wife, my assailant miscalculated my ability to fight  
and defend myself thanks to my Army medic training. He certainly got more than he  
bargained for that fateful night as I fought back with all my might. He fled our home and I  
was able to crawl to the phone and call 911. I was treated at Camp Lejeune Naval Hospital  
for the injuries I sustained in the assault and released without any referrals for follow-up  
support or care.

Knowledge and understanding of PTSD and trauma-informed care was woefully lacking in  
the mid-1990s. Without any professional support and treatment, I tried my best to pick up  
the pieces of my life and carry on, like any good soldier is hard-wired to do. It would take  
many months before I was able to sleep with the lights out or drive alone in the dark. For  
many years that followed, I would wake up screaming in the middle of the night with my  
former husband trying his best to de-escalate my terror and re-orient me. The body stores  
trauma and keeps score, especially when untreated. I was living in a constant state of  
adrenaline-fueled hypervigilance. To outsiders looking in, it appeared that I was the picture  
of success and unstoppable. I obtained a business degree, got a commission in the US Air  
Force, was a high performing company grade officer until I separated from the military at

the end of my contract, had a son, used my post-9/11 GI Bill to get a nursing degree, excelled as a healthcare leader in the public safety/law enforcement space, and was accepted into an Ivy league graduate program. But inside, I was slowly becoming a shell of myself; the trauma noise inside my head was deafening. I knew that I was in serious trouble when my 26 year marriage disintegrated, when the mere “ding” of an elevator button caused me to jump out of my skin, and when, while driving at high speed on an interstate, I came within seconds of intentionally driving myself into the jersey barriers on the side of the road, a desperate attempt to escape all the mental and physical pain that was consuming me.

My close brush with death was a wake-up call to me that I was spiraling out of control and that I needed help. On June 19, 2021, I reached out to a veteran friend whose testimony you will hear later this morning. I confided that I was perilously close to becoming yet another veteran suicide statistic. Within my own veteran circles, I had already lost two beloved Marine Corps friends to suicide, Cpl Jimmy Southerly and Sgt Ryan Maher. They were both groomsmen in my wedding and I loved them like brothers. I was haunted by the fact that they didn’t reach out for help before taking their own lives and I was committed to not following in their footsteps. My son needed his mother.

My guardian angel veteran friend sprung into action and had me scheduled to meet with Dr. James Lynch in Annapolis, Maryland within hours of my call to him for help. While the cost of the stellate ganglion block would not have been an option for me on such short notice, financial concerns were eliminated thanks to the generosity of For The Love of a Veteran, a nonprofit that you will hear from later this morning. All that was required of me was to have the courage to change.

It is not hyperbole to say that the Stellate Ganglion block saved my life. Dr. Lynch confirmed by guided ultrasound that the anesthetic had reached the intended nerve cluster in my neck and, almost instantly, my body was overcome with an overwhelming sense of peace and calm. In the days and weeks that followed, the fog of trauma that had become my baseline lifted. I saw the world in color again; I noticed little things that I was previously programmed to tune out..like the birds singing or children laughing. I was finally ready to start the hard work of ongoing cognitive behavioral therapy to unlearn the maladaptive behaviors that had kept me in mere survival mode for so long. I learned to recognize the warning signs of trauma and stress responses and I gained new tools and healthy coping mechanisms to address them when they surfaced. There is no magic bullet that will completely eliminate the long term impact of a traumatic experience but the stellate ganglion block can be an incredibly important first step in the healing journey. My current role as a sexual assault medical forensic nurse would never have been possible without Dr.

Lynch and the stellate ganglion block. I needed to heal myself before I could compassionately and effectively care for others.

While every veteran's story is different, we all took an oath to serve and defend our country. Every brother and sister veteran suffering from PTSD deserves access to evidence-based treatment options like the stellate ganglion block through the VA. Relief shouldn't be reserved only for those with the financial means or network connections to pursue treatment outside the medical establishment that is ultimately responsible for our care.

I welcome and look forward to answering any questions you may have about my experience with SGB. Thank you for your time and commitment to veterans.