



STATE OF RHODE ISLAND

RIVETS

OFFICE OF VETERANS SERVICES

Daniel J. McKee **Governor**

Kasim J. Yarn **Director**

April 9, 2024

The Honorable Joseph J. Solomon, Jr.
Chair, House Corporations Committee
State House
82 Smith Street
Providence, RI 02903
via email: rep-solomon@rilegislature.gov
via email: HouseCorporations@rilegislature.gov

RE: H-7609 – Relating to Deceptive Trade Practices (Provides protection and prevent the unethical, improper conduct and the collection of fees, by anyone advising or assisting a veteran filing a claim for disability benefits with the Department of Veterans Affairs except as authorized by federal law.)

Dear Chairman Solomon:

I write today in support of H-7609 – relating to the Deceptive Trade Practices [Provides protection and prevent the unethical, improper conduct and the collection of fees, by anyone advising or assisting a Veteran filing a claim for disability benefits with the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) except as authorized by federal law].

The unaccredited groups argue that companies should be able to earn money through the services provided. The unaccredited groups often promise to increase Veterans' VA disability ratings and irrationally argue that the high fees charged equates to making more effective in assisting Veterans than the free services offered by State Agencies, and VA-accredited Veterans Service Organizations.

The Federal VA already provides pathways for accredited representatives to earn fees in numerous ways. Also, the agents and attorneys are held to high ethical and professional standards by the VA's Office of General Counsel (OGC) with clear recourse for Veterans who feel as though of being harmed. Under VA regulations, only the Veteran themselves or a VA accredited individual is allowed to file a claim, and charging fees for an initial filing of a claim is not allowed. Fees are generally only allowed to be assessed on an appeal of denied claim, and these fees are calculated based on a reasonable percentage of any retroactive benefits ("back pay") awarded.

As always, I thank you for your partnership and consideration of this letter, and I urge the Committee to support this bill. Your leadership and advocacy for Rhode Island's Veterans and their families are appreciated.

Regards,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "K. Yarn".

Kasim J. Yarn
Director

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cc: HouseCorporations@rilegislature.gov