



March 25, 2025

The Honorable Joseph Solomon
Chairman, House Corporations Committee
82 Smith St
Providence, Rhode Island 02903

Dear Chairman Solomon and Members of the Committee,

On behalf of Purple Heart Homes (PHH), a North Carolina-based 501(c)(3) nonprofit dedicated to serving Veterans across the nation, we are writing to express our opposition to Rhode Island HB 5043.

Purple Heart Homes was founded in 2008 by Veterans John Gallina and the late Dale Beatty, both of whom served together in Iraq and returned with life-altering injuries. Inspired by the unwavering support of their community, they established PHH to honor fellow Veterans. Today, PHH provides housing solutions to service-connected, disabled, and aging Veterans of all eras across the United States, reflecting our core commitment to supporting Veterans and their rights.

Attempting to protect Veterans is an honorable endeavor that we all share; unfortunately, RI HB 5043 misses the mark and would not only deny a Veteran the right to choose how they pursue their own claim, but they also fail to address the full spectrum of the issues at hand. The bills as sold also fail to address critical issues including: providing additional oversight and protections for the Veteran while preserving their Constitutional rights to petition their government in a manner they see fit, and ensuring Veterans have access to diverse options and effective solutions for decades to come.

Rather than purposely restrict a Veteran's right to choose how they pursue their claim as HB 5043 does, a better approach is to implement necessary reforms that must take place to ensure the integrity of the systems and to protect Veterans from potentially bad actors. Some of these reforms include, but are not limited to:

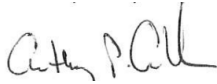
- o Mandating any fees are purely contingent upon a successful outcome and are not to exceed 5x the monthly increase;
- o Prohibiting any initial or non-refundable fees;
- o Mandating that presumptive period Veterans be referred to a VSO of their choice;
- o Getting written confirmation from the Veteran they have been informed of their free options;
- o Prohibiting private companies from having doctors on the payroll performing secondary medical exams;
- o Prohibiting the use of international call centers or data centers for processing Veteran's personal information.
- o Prohibiting aggressive and direct solicitation;
- o Prohibiting advertising or guaranteeing a successful outcome.

These are true protections that will ensure the Veteran is not taken advantage of, while still preserving their rights to seek expert claims support.

PHH also supports Veterans' rights to choose reliable and expert assistance, whether through private entities or traditional Veterans Service Organizations. Veterans deserve the freedom to access the support they need without undue restriction or compromise, and these amendments serve as an important step in that direction.

The demand for current services in this space is far too vast for the government and VSOs to handle on their own. This highlights the need for an enhanced system that provides an expanded pathway for accreditation and enhanced oversight. HB 5043 does the exact opposite, and we encourage you to oppose this legislation as it denies Veteran's choice and keeps them trapped in the current broken system.

Thank you for your dedication to Rhode Island's Veterans.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Paul Cockerham".

Paul Cockerham
Chief Development Officer
Purple Heart Homes