



**BLACK VETERANS EMPOWERMENT COUNCIL INC.**

909 Rose Ave. Suite 400 North Bethesda, Maryland 20852

www.bvecinc.org

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

March 25, 2025

Dear Chairman Solomon and Members of the Committee,

On behalf of Black Veterans Empowerment Council (BVEC), one of the Nation's largest Black Veterans groups, I am writing to respectfully express **opposition to Rhode Island HB 5043.**

Attempting to protect Veterans is an honorable endeavor that we all share; unfortunately, 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.

Additionally, nearly identical legislation is currently being challenged in other states on First Amendment grounds, including Veterans' right to petition their government – a right they were willing to give their lives for.


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.

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.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'S. Deadwiler', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Shawn L. Deadwiler  
Chairman of the Board and President