

**National Association for Black Veterans, Inc.
Southern Maryland**

STATEMENT IN SUPPORT OF HOUSE BILL 267

Veteran Benefits Matters -Claim Services – Prohibitions and Requirements

Good afternoon, Chairman Delegate C.T. Wilson and Honorable members of the Economics Matters Committee.

My name is Lawrence (Mike) Moses. I am a Vietnam veteran, the former Maryland State Commander of the National Association for Black Veterans, and an Accredited Veteran Service Officer (VSO) authorized by the Department of Veterans Affairs. I obtained my accreditation after completing the online course Responsibility, Involvement, and Preparation of Claims (alias T.R.I.P.), HIPAA, and the Rules of Behavior assessment.

Since 2012, I have processed hundreds of veteran claims and organized frequent claims clinics to support veterans and caregivers of all races and genders, particularly Black veterans from across Maryland. However, I have observed an increase in non-accredited veteran claims assistance since COVID-19 and the enactment of the PACT Act, which expands VA health care and benefits. This has cost veterans thousands of dollars for a process that should be free and has led to future reductions in their benefits.

I recently received a mail envelope from an out-of-town law firm in Chicago. The firm informed me that it was aware of my disability records and could assist me in increasing my benefits and compensation. We had an uncomfortable Q&A for fifteen minutes. However, for the record, the law firm **did invade my privacy** by stating that they knew about my disability without my consent. How they got my information was never revealed.

In closing, I asked those listing in Chicago if they knew what "Presumptive, Secondary Direct Service connections" were or what the difference was between PTSD and Acquired Psychiatric Disorder.

The phone went silent.

They would have known the answer to tell me and the next Veteran if they were VA-accredited.

This House Bill will help provide generations of Veterans—and their survivors—with the care and benefits they've earned and deserve.

This is why I'm asking you to support HB 267.