May 7, 2024

The Honorable Thomas J. Umberg

Senate Judiciary Committee

1021 O Street, Suite 6530

Sacramento, CA 95814

**Subject: SB 1124 (Menjivar) – Veteran Benefits Protection Act - SUPPORT**

Dear Chair Umberg:

The Siskiyou County Board of Supervisors is writing to express our strong support for SB 2265 (McCarty). The proposed Bill’s focus is on supporting our veterans and protecting them from financial exploitation. While veterans can receive assistance at no cost from County veterans’ offices, there are individuals and organizations that are not accredited and charge veterans for assistance.

If implemented, SB 1124 will require persons interested in representing veterans in their benefit claims process to become VA-accredited. This accreditation requires an individual to pass a certification exam that tests their knowledge, pass a background test, and complete ongoing training. The fees that VA-accredited attorneys and agents can charge are capped by law, they are subject to discipline, up to and including revocation of their accreditation, if they do not represent their clients competently and in accordance with the laws.

This Bill is a proactive measure to safeguard veterans from any entitles that might exploit their need for assistance, ensuring that support remains accessible and reliable. Siskiyou County is committed to supporting those who have served and feel that this Bill will provide the oversight needed to uphold the integrity of the support system designed to serve our veterans and ensure their welfare.

Finally, SB 1124 reinforces the principle that veterans should not be charged for accessing the benefits they have earned. It is a matter of honor and duty that we, as a society, provide these services without imposing additional financial burdens on our veterans.

For the reasons above, the Siskiyou County Board of Supervisors supports SB 1124 and respectfully request you to vote AYE.

Sincerely,

Michael N. Kobseff

Chair, Board of Supervisors

cc: Honorable Senator Brian Dahle

Honorable Senator Marie Alvarado-Gil

Honorable Senator Menjivar

Honorable Assembly Member Megan Dahle

Marion Moses, California Association of County Veterans Services Officers

Kayln Dean, California State Association of Counties

Mary-Ann Warmerdam, Rural County Representatives of CaliforniaKaren Lange, Shaw Yoder Antwih Schmelzer & Lange