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July 1, 2025

The Honorable Pilar Schiavo
Chair, Assembly Committee on Military and Veterans Affairs
1020 N Street, Room 389
Sacramento, CA 95814

RE: SB 694 (Archuleta), Veterans Benefits Protection Act of 2025 – SUPPORT

Dear Assembly Member Schiavo,

I am writing on behalf of the Kern County Board of Supervisors to express our strong support for SB 694 (Archuleta), which strengthens consumer protections for California veterans by ensuring that only accredited individuals may charge for assistance in filing claims for U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) benefits.

Kern County is proud to be home to a large and vibrant community of veterans. These individuals have made tremendous sacrifices in service to our country, and they deserve trustworthy and qualified assistance when seeking the benefits they have earned. Unfortunately, a growing number of unaccredited and often predatory actors, commonly referred to as “claim sharks”, are taking advantage of veterans by charging illegal or excessive fees while providing little to no legitimate support. These bad actors lack VA accreditation, operate without oversight, and often compromise sensitive personal information.

SB 694 will provide critical protection by:

1. **Prohibiting unaccredited individuals** from charging for the preparation, presentation, or prosecution of VA benefit claims.
2. **Enhancing penalties** for unauthorized access to veterans’ data in secure VA systems.
3. **Establishing clear and enforceable fee standards** under the Consumer Legal Remedies Act, aligning with those required of VA-accredited representatives.

This important legislation builds on the framework of SB 1124 (Menjivar, 2024) and takes further steps to eliminate unethical practices that exploit vulnerable veterans. By ensuring accountability and transparency, SB 694 helps reinforce the integrity of the VA claims process and strengthens existing consumer protections.

For these reasons, the Kern County Board of Supervisors commends the author's leadership on this issue and respectfully urges the Legislature to vote **YES on SB 694**. We are committed to protecting our veterans and ensuring they receive the qualified assistance they deserve.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'LP' or similar initials, with a stylized, flowing script.

Leticia Perez, Chair
Kern County Board of Supervisors

cc: Honorable Members, Assembly Committee on Military and Veterans Affairs
Honorable Members, Kern Legislative Delegation
Kern County Veterans Service Department
Shaw Yoder Antwih Schmelzer & Lange