

**National Association for Black Veterans, Inc.
Southern Maryland
STATEMENT IN SUPPORT OF SENATE BILL 0928**

Veteran Benefits Matters -Claim Services – Prohibitions and Requirements

**The Honorable Pamela Beidle
The Honorable Antonio Hayes
Senate Finance Committee
3 East Miller Senate Office Building
Annapolis, Maryland 21401**

Good afternoon, Chair Beidle

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 based on the requirements of the (T.R.I.P.) EXAM Training, Responsibility, Involvement, and Preparation of Claims, IN ADDITION TO 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 (Sokolove Law) 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 fifteen-minute Q&A. However, for the record, they stated they knew about my disability without my consent.

How they got my information was never revealed.

In closing, I asked those representing the firm ..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.

If they WERE VA-accredited, they would have known the answer.

This Senate 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 SB 0928