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Board of Supervisors

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February 3, 2026

The Honorable Gavin Newsom
Governor of California
1303 10th Street, Suite 1173
Sacramento, CA 95814

Re: Senate Bill 694 (Archuleta) – SUPPORT

Dear Honorable Gavin Newsom:

On behalf of the Mendocino County Board of Supervisors, I am writing to express support for Senate Bill 694 authored by Senator Bob Archuleta. This measure would strengthen consumer protections for California's veterans by ensuring that only accredited individuals may charge for services related to filing claims for U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) benefits.

SB 694 builds on the framework of SB 1124 (Menjivar, 2024) and addresses the alarming rise in unaccredited and often predatory actors—commonly known as "claim sharks"—that charge excessive or illegal fees for assisting veterans with benefit claims. These bad actors, who lack VA accreditation and oversight, pose serious risks to vulnerable veterans by promising guaranteed outcomes, pressuring veterans into dubious contracts, and compromising access to sensitive personal data.

SB 694 will prohibit unaccredited individuals from charging for the preparation, presentation, or prosecution of VA benefit claims. The bill will also enhance penalties for unauthorized access to veterans' data on secure VA systems and codify reasonable fee standards by clarifying under the Consumer Legal Remedies Act that fees exceeding those allowed for VA-accredited representatives are unlawful.

California's veterans deserve transparent, qualified, and accountable representation when navigating the VA benefits process. This bill ensures that only individuals who meet federal standards and adhere to strict ethical requirements can charge for these services—protecting veterans from exploitation and reinforcing existing legal frameworks.

I urge you to sign this measure.

Sincerely,

Bernie Norvell, Chair
Mendocino County Board of Supervisors

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