



STATE OF RHODE ISLAND

RIVETS

OFFICE OF VETERANS SERVICES

Daniel J. McKee **Governor**

Kasim J. Yarn **Director**

March 9, 2022

The Honorable Samuel Azzinaro
Chair, House Committee on Veterans' Affairs
Rhode Island State House
82 Smith Street
Providence, RI 02903
via email: Rep-Azzinaro@rilegislature.gov
via email: HouseVeteransAffairs@rilegislature.gov

RE: H-7750 – Relating to Military Affairs and Defense – Veterans' Affairs

Dear Chairman Azzinaro:

I write today regarding H-7750 – Relating to Military Affairs and Defense – Veterans' Affairs, which would establish a state registry of Veterans exposed to airborne hazards and open burn pits.

Exposure to airborne hazards and open burn pits causes serious symptoms and detrimental health problems for many Veterans. For this reason, the United States Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) established in 2014, and has since maintained, the Airborne Hazards and Open Burn Pit Registry (AHOBPR). The AHOBPR is a tool to help Servicemembers and Veterans become more aware of their own health and help the VA to identify health conditions possibly related to burn pit exposure or other airborne hazards during military service. Participation in AHOBPR is voluntary. The VA is the agency providing, and responsible for, benefits associated with airborne hazards and burn pit exposure.

The Rhode Island Office of Veterans Services is concerned that the creation of a state-level airborne hazards and open burn pit exposure registry could potentially cause confusion, leading to Veterans registering with one agency and not the other. Given that there are no state-level benefits for burn pit and airborne hazard exposure, it is important that Veterans exposed to these toxins be connected to the VA for benefits and continue to be encouraged to register with the AHOBPR.

We look forward to working with Chairwoman Vella-Wilkinson to ensure our agency is best serving and reaching Veterans exposed to airborne hazards and open burn pits. Thanks to Chairwoman Vella-Wilkinson's advocacy, we will be adding a direct link to AHOBPR to our www.vets.ri.gov website.

As always, I thank you for your partnership and consideration of this letter. Your leadership and

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advocacy for Rhode Island's Veterans and their families is appreciated.

Regards,



Kasim J. Yarn
Director

cc: The Honorable Members of the House Veterans' Affairs Committee
The Honorable Camille F.J. Vella-Wilkinson
Nicole McCarty, Esquire, Chief Legal Counsel to the Speaker of the House