



STATE OF RHODE ISLAND

RIVETS

OFFICE OF VETERANS SERVICES

Daniel J. McKee **Governor**

Kasim J. Yarn **Director**

February 2, 2023

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

RE: H-5128 – Relating to Military Affairs and Defense – Rhode Island Veterans Home

Dear Chairman Azzinaro:

I write today regarding H-5128 – Relating to Military Affairs and Defense – Rhode Island Veterans Home, which would expand eligibility for admission to the Rhode Island Veterans Home. Our Veterans Home stands as a testament of the State's appreciation to all the men and women who honorably served our country. In 2017, the facility was rebuilt from the ground up to provide state-of-the-art amenities and provides housing and care for Rhode Island's Wartime Veterans. The mission of the Veterans Home continues to be the delivery of high-quality nursing care, responsiveness to resident health and safety needs, and the commitment to ensuring the highest quality of life for our Rhode Island Heroes.

Through our work at the Rhode Island Office of Veterans Services, we assist all Veterans, active duty, guard and reserve, and their families to connect with programs, benefits and services, to ensure every Rhode Islander who heroically serves and sacrifices for our freedom is afforded the opportunity to flourish in our state. We work closely with partners at the Executive Office of Health and Human Services, the Office of Healthy Aging, the Long Term Care Ombudsman and other agencies to ensure Veterans, and their families, not eligible for admission to the Veterans Home receive appropriate long term care services and supports.

H-5128 adds eligibility groups to those eligible for admission to the Veterans Home; these groups are not currently included as eligible in RIGL. State Veterans homes can access per diem payment when a Veteran is in need of nursing home care and meets federal Veterans Health Administration eligibility. If the Veteran can receive medical care at a VA Medical Facility, then the Veteran is eligible, and the VA can pay for the per diem. Also, minimum periods of active-duty service are required in 38 U.S.C. §5303-5303A.

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For the groups referenced in H-5128, such requirements for per diem eligibility are as follows:

- Veterans who served in the Cold War would be eligible for per diem if enlisted after September 7, 1980, and the Veteran served 24 months or more of continuous active duty, or the full period for which such person was called or ordered to active duty.
- Veterans who are receiving VA service-connected disability are eligible for VA medical care and would be eligible for per diem.
- National Guard members with less than 90 days of wartime service must have served the full period for which such person was called or ordered to active duty, and cannot be active duty for training purposes only.

If members of the groups being added by H-5128 do not meet eligibility for the per diem reimbursements from United States Department of Veterans Affairs, general revenue funds would need to be allocated to support these new admissions.

Currently, there are eligible Veterans on the admissions wait-list for the Rhode Island Veterans Home. As of January 27, 2023, time from completion of application to admission is approximately seven to 10 months. Increasing the number of Veterans eligible for admission to the Rhode Island Veterans Home, as H-5128 does, will only further increase the admissions wait-list and the length of time War-time Veterans wait to enter the Home.

As always, I thank you for your partnership and consideration of this letter. Your leadership and 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 Vella-Wilkinson
Nicole McCarty, Esq., Chief Legal Counsel to the Speaker of the House