



**State of Rhode Island**  
**Lieutenant Governor Sabina Matos**

March 10, 2026

Senator Walter S. Felag, Jr.  
Chair, Senate Committee on Special Legislation and Veterans Affairs  
82 Smith St, Room 211  
Providence, RI 02903

Re: Letter of Support for S2177: An Act Relating To Military Affairs And Defense – Decorations

Dear Senator Felag:

I write to you in support for each S2177: An Act Relating To Military Affairs And Defense – Decorations.

This bill establishes the Rhode Island orange heart medal to formally recognize Rhode Island veterans whose service exposed them to toxic herbicides, burn pits, or other hazardous agents. As Lt. Governor for the State of Rhode Island, I work with service members and military families across the state, including our brave Blue Star Families.

Among the many issues impacting veterans in our state, long-term health conditions arising from exposure to toxic herbicides, burn pits, and other hazardous agents can often go unseen and undiscussed. By creating an Orange Heart medal, we have an opportunity to not only recognize and express our sincere appreciation to the veterans of our state, but to also call attention to the longstanding medical issues that can arise from such service.

I am incredibly grateful to the service members from Rhode Island who sacrifice their health, safety, and their lives to protect us. This bill is a step in the right direction when it comes to honoring that service and expanding access to necessary services.

For these reasons, I urge you to vote this bill out of committee favorably.

Sincerely,

Sabina Matos

Rhode Island Lieutenant Governor