

March 11, 2026
Testimony for Senate Bill S. 3001
Submitted by: Tia N. Kha

Dear Honorable Chairman Felag, and Senate Special Legislation and Veterans Affairs Committee Members,

My name is Tia Neng Kha, I was born in January 1954 and was recruited to serve in the United State Secret Mission in Laos after I completed middle school in June of 1969 at the age of 15. After the U.S. Secret War ended 1975, many Hmong veterans become refugees and immigrated to the United States, primarily to escape political persecution, genocide and retaliation following the communist takeover of Laos, since the Hmong had been a key ally of the United States.

Today, on behalf of the Hmong / Laotian Special Guerrilla Unit (SGU) Veterans in Rhode Island, I am here to ask for your consideration in support of Senate Bill S. 3001. This bill, following already established federal guidelines, under title 38 CFR § 38.619 (2) (f) will allow for the interment and honor guard benefits for the Hmong/Laotian SGU veterans who served faithfully in the United States' paramilitary operations in Laos during the Vietnam War.

Yet, despite our loyalty, courage and sacrifices, we have not been formally recognized as veterans. We fought side by side with American troops. We bled and suffered as they did. We lost brothers and sisters in combat, yet history has overlooked our Hmong contributions.

Today, I urge this generation of leaders to expand the definition of “veteran” to include those who fought alongside American forces in Laos. Recognizing our service is not just a symbolic gesture- it is a long overdue acknowledgment of the sacrifices we made for a country that was not yet our own.

The United States has always honored those who stood for freedom and democracy, it is time to extend that honor to the Hmong and other allies forces who answered the call to serve during the Vietnam War. By granting this recognition, the United States affirms its commitment to those who stood shoulder to shoulder with American soldiers in one of the history's most challenging wars. We ask for nothing more than the dignity and respect that all veterans deserve.

Respectfully,

Tianengkha

Tia N. Kha

Liaison of the Hmong/Lao SGU Veterans-RI.