



Brad Farrin
Senator, District 3

131st MAINE SENATE

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**Testimony of Senator Brad Farrin
Presenting L.D. 2259, An Act to Prohibit Receiving Compensation for Assisting a Person to
Obtain Veterans' Benefits Except as Permitted Under Federal Law
Before the Veterans and Legal Affairs Committee
March 12, 2024**

Senator Hickman, Representative Supica, and members of the Joint Standing Committee on Veterans and Legal Affairs. My name is Brad Farrin, and I represent the people of Senate District 3, which includes towns in Kennebec, Somerset and Penobscot counties. I'm here to present LD 2259, *"An Act to Prohibit Receiving Compensation for Assisting a Person to Obtain Veterans' Benefits Except as Permitted Under Federal Law"*.

As a veteran, this bill is very important to me. It was brought to my attention that many other states were proposing and passing similar legislation to protect veterans from "claim sharks" which, according to the VFW, is "an individual or company that charges hefty fees to "assist" or "consult" veterans and survivors with filing their VA benefits claims." Veterans are never required to pay for benefits which they earned.

Taking advantage of veterans who are trying to claim compensation for their service is despicable, and we must protect them from these predatory practices in every way we can. These "claim sharks" are individuals or groups that are highly coordinated and skilled at the immoral operation they run. They are cunning, convincing and manipulative, often offering consultation from their own network of doctors while promising an expedited examination and guaranteeing an increased disability rating or percentage increase to their benefits.

Since the passage of the PACT Act in 2022 claim sharks have charged massive amounts of money to our Veterans and their Families. At the National level there is an important House and Senate bill - HR-1139 and S-740 GUARD VA Benefits Act - that will reinstate the fines and jail time that was suspended to help catch up on VA claims. This has very strong support.

This bill will provide an extra wall of security to our veterans further protecting them from predatory and deceptive practices that target their hard earned monetary benefits. I ask that you will consider voting to pass this legislation which will prohibit individuals from receiving compensation for "advising" or "assisting" with veterans' benefits- unless both parties have consented in written form- and will provide some increased protection of our veterans. Thank you.