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P.O. BOX 942849
SACRAMENTO, CA 94249-0108
(916) 319-2334



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GRANT SILVA

June 15, 2021

The Honorable Mark Takano
Chair, House Committee on Veterans Affairs
One Hundred Seventeenth Congress
B-234 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Re: Your Letter Dated June 15, 2021, Regarding AJR 12

Dear Congressman Takano:

Thank you for your letter regarding AJR 12, a California resolution urging Congress to remove the requirement that, to be eligible for GI benefits, a law school must be accredited by the American Bar Association (ABA) and the overly broad restriction that graduates must be eligible to sit for a bar examination in any state because those requirements deprive veterans in California of important and high-quality educational opportunities.

We respect the expertise of the House Committee on Veterans' Affairs on federal veterans' issues. At the same time, the California State Assembly (and Senate) Committees on Judiciary have expertise on California-accredited law schools (CALs), their regulatory framework, and the significant part they play in providing access to legal education in California. CALs offer an important resource for legal education in rural areas of the state (where few, if any, ABA-accredited law schools exist, but where virtually all of our state's military bases are located), and a vital tool to achieve the goal of diversifying the legal profession in California. Our Committee, along with the Senate Judiciary Committee, also carries out the California Legislature's duty, shared with the judicial branch of government, to oversee legal education in the state.

Despite clear interest and expertise in these issues, neither the California Legislature, State Supreme Court, nor the State Bar of California were involved nor consulted on the content of HR 7105, Section 1016 during the two years when Congressional hearings and analysis were ongoing, despite the clear and adverse consequences to California veterans and CALs. It could be that there was extensive vetting about the impact to California veterans and CALs of requiring all law schools that receive GI funds to be ABA-accredited, but we are unaware of any. Furthermore, there is limited information on Congress' website regarding the rationale for the legislation. Therefore, we would welcome the chance to review the congressional record—including any letters, reports, complaints, disciplinary actions, or other materials that show unanimous and vigorous support of the nation's largest veterans and military service organizations for making CALs and their students ineligible for GI Bill funds. As it is, we are

unaware of even one complaint from one veteran about the quality of legal education offered at any of the CALS.

Your letter mentioned the importance of the bar exam passage rate as an issue of primary concern to your committee. However, HR 7105, Section 1016 does not logically address that issue, given that some CALS have higher passage rates on the California bar exam than some ABA-accredited law schools in California and in other states. As a fellow elected representative from California, I hope you can appreciate the value and great work that CALS provide to California veterans. Indeed the University of La Verne, a CALS that formerly was ABA-accredited, sits immediately outside the boundary of your own Congressional district. It provides a quality legal education to its students (with a bar passage rate for first time California bar exam-takers of 73% on the February 2020 bar exam, higher than four ABA-accredited law school in the state and at least six from outside the state). To arbitrarily deny access to these schools to veterans is a disservice to these quality schools and to the veterans who could be taking advantage of them, in addition to the geographic and racial diversity they provide for California lawyers.

I would appreciate the opportunity to speak with you to resolve any concerns you may have about the CALS, as well as the concerns of the California Legislature about HR 7105, Section 1016. My bipartisan coalition of co-authors and I would happily drop AJR 12 if we were able to reach a mutually agreeable solution to this serious problem. This is feasible, given the fact that there are relatively simple ways to protect the public and offer veterans valuable educational opportunities. I look forward to discussing those proposals with you.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Mark Stone", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

MARK STONE

Assemblymember, 29th District

Chair, Assembly Committee on Judiciary