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SUSAN RUIZ  
23RD DISTRICT

February 7, 2024

To: Veterans and Military Committee  
From: Rep Susan Ruiz  
RE: HB2623

Chairman Ellis, Vice Chair Dodson, Ranking Member Weigel and members of the Committee. Thank you for the opportunity to carry HB2623.

This bill updates the veterans claims assistance program to include references to veterans affairs medical centers and cross-accreditation requirements. K.S.A. 73- 1234 stipulates that the Kansas commission on veterans affairs office shall establish and administer a **veterans claims assistance program** to improve the coordination of veterans benefits counseling in Kansas to maximize the effective and efficient use of taxpayer dollars and to ensure every veteran is served and receives claims counseling and assistance.

The KS commission on veterans affairs office shall adopt rules and regulations to implement and administer the veterans claims assistance program and the service grant program to include the initial and continuing training requirements for veterans claims assistance representatives. Training activities for veterans claims assistance representatives shall be the responsibility of the veterans service organization employing the veterans claims assistance representatives and shall be conducted by qualified trainers.

A veterans service organization must agree to cross-accredit the officers and employees of the veterans affairs office who are veterans and who work in the veteran service program and veterans claims assistance representatives of other veterans service organizations who are performing services under the veterans claims assistance program. The person to be cross-accredited shall provide proof to the deputy director of veterans services that such person has successfully completed the federal department of veterans affairs office training, responsibility, involvement and preparation of claims (TRIP) course or equivalent.

According to the Kansas Commission on Veterans Affairs, enactment of HB2623 would not have a fiscal effect on agency operations.