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Testimony in Support of Senate Bill 243 *Senate Committee on Financial Institutions and Revenue* Tuesday, May 25, 2021

Good morning Mr. Chairman and committee members. I appreciate the opportunity to come before you and speak in support of Senate Bill (SB) 243. This important proposal will expand the eligibility for the Disabled Veterans and Surviving Spouses Property Tax Credit to more of our deserving disabled veterans. I am grateful to Senator Jacque for continuing to work with me on this important legislation.

For many years Wisconsin has been a leader in providing benefits and services to our veterans. This legislation builds upon that by increasing the number of veterans who qualify for the Disabled Veterans and Surviving Spouses Property Tax Credit. Currently, in order to qualify for this property tax credit, a veteran's service-connected disability rating must be 100%. SB 243 lowers the threshold to claim the credit to 70%. Under this bill, the maximum credit that an eligible person could claim is multiplied by the percentage of that person's service-connected disability rating. For example, if an eligible veteran has a service-connected disability rating of 70%, they may claim a 70% property tax credit.

I am sure many of you have seen news stories of deserving wounded combat veterans receiving support from the community and non-profits to either build or renovate a home to accommodate their disability. However, these improvements often increase the property value and the amount of property tax owed. Due to their injuries, a number of these veterans are living on fixed incomes and struggle to pay their property taxes. Because of the way the tax credit is structured now, a veteran who has a service-connected disability rating of 80% or even 90% and faces significant barriers to paying their property taxes does not qualify for property tax relief under the Disabled Veterans and Surviving Spouses Property Tax Credit. By expanding the eligibility for this tax credit we are providing needed property tax relief that will allow more of our disabled veterans to stay in their homes.

As I've traveled around my district over the past few years, one of the top concerns I have heard from veterans and veterans' organizations is increasing the eligibility for the Disabled Veterans and Surviving Spouses Property Tax Credit. From my conversations with colleagues here in the legislature and our statewide veterans' organizations, I've learned that this is a priority for veterans across our state.

Mr. Chairman and members, I ask for your support of SB 243 and thank you again for the opportunity to testify before you today.