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## **Testimony in Support of Assembly Bill 102**

*Assembly Committee on Ways and Means*

Thursday, March 30, 2023

Chairman Macco and committee members, thank you for this opportunity to speak to you today in support of Assembly Bill (AB) 102. I would like to thank Senator Jacque for continuing to work with me on this important legislation.

For many years Wisconsin has been a national leader in providing benefits and services to our veterans. AB 102 builds upon that by expanding the eligibility for the Disabled Veterans and Surviving Spouses Property Tax Credit. Currently, a veteran's service-connected disability rating must be 100% in order for them, or their unremarried surviving spouse, to qualify for this credit. Under AB 102, veterans with a service-connected disability rating of 70% and above would now qualify. The maximum credit that an eligible veteran could claim is multiplied by the percentage of that veteran's service-connected disability rating. For example, an eligible veteran with a 70% disability rating may claim a 70% property tax credit. This expansion of the property tax credit would also apply to an unremarried surviving spouse of an eligible veteran.

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. Unfortunately, under current law, unless a veteran has a 100% service-connected disability rating they do not qualify for this tax credit. By expanding the eligibility for this credit we are providing property tax relief that will allow more of our disabled veterans and their spouses to stay in their homes and out of more costly alternatives such as long-term care facilities. Not only does keeping these folks in their homes save money, but also preserves a higher quality of life.

As I'm sure you know, Wisconsin has some of the highest property taxes in the nation. I realize there are some who have concerns that this legislation only provides property tax relief for a small number of Wisconsinites and feel that we should focus on providing broader property tax relief. While I support efforts to provide additional property tax relief, this bill is a great first step on the path toward broader property tax relief.

As I've traveled around my district over the past few years, increasing the eligibility for the Disabled Veterans and Surviving Spouses Property Tax Credit is one of the primary concerns I've

heard from veterans and veterans' organizations. From my conversations with statewide veteran service organizations and colleagues here in the Legislature, it is clear to me that this issue is a priority for veterans across our state. You will hear from some veteran service organizations today about why this proposal is their top legislative priority.

When our veterans joined our nation's armed forces, they did so knowing that they may give their life in service to our country. It is only right that we help to better support those who were significantly injured while serving in our armed forces. Mr. Chairman and members, I ask for your support of AB 102 and thank you again for the opportunity to testify before you today.