

Congressman Eric Sorensen, IL-17
House Veterans Affairs' Committee Member Day Testimony
June 22, 2023

On behalf of Illinois' 17th District and our veterans who call it home, thank you Chairman Bost and Ranking Member Takano for allowing me the opportunity to testify here today.

We all owe a debt of gratitude to the men and women who served our country honorably and that means making sure our veterans have access to health care, employment, and housing when they return home.

Today I would especially like to call attention to the importance of ensuring the homes of veterans with disabilities are safe, accessible, and comfortable.

I recently introduced a bill with Ranking Member Takano, H.R. 4047, the *Autonomy for All Veterans Act*, which would increase financial assistance to veterans and active duty servicemembers for medically necessary home improvements and structural alterations.

Specifically, my bill would increase VA's Home Improvements and Structural Alterations (HISA) grants, a program that provides financial assistance to eligible veterans for home modifications to improve accessibility, such as installing guardrails or lowering sinks and countertops.

While the cost of materials and labor has risen by 40% over the past 10 years, the grant rates have not been updated by Congress since 2009.

Currently, the lifetime limit for a HISA grant is \$6,700 for veterans with service-connected disabilities and \$2,000 for veterans, usually the elderly, with non-service-related conditions.

Our bill removes the disparity between service and non-service connected conditions and increases the lifetime limit to \$10,000 for all disabled veterans.

It would also index the benefit amount to inflation to keep the rates current.

These changes will help ensure that HISA grants more closely match current needs and that we're doing our part to provide veterans with the best quality of life when they return home.

I look forward to working with the Committee and our VSO partners to move this bill forward on behalf of the veterans in my district and across the country.

Thank you for your time and attention.