

Thank you.

I appreciate the opportunity to appear before the Veterans Affairs Committee to share my policy ideas on how we can better serve veterans and their families.

I keep coming back to this Committee.

I came before you in June to discuss my *Caring for Survivors Act*, which would expand benefits for survivors of service members and veterans who have given their lives in service to the United States of America.

Today, I would like to encourage you to advance the legislation through this Committee as a next step towards eventual passage on the House floor.

When a service member dies in the line of duty, or a veteran dies from service-related injuries or illnesses, their surviving family members receive a monthly benefit known as Dependency and Indemnity Compensation, or D-I-C.

Unfortunately, the D-I-C rate has been minimally adjusted since the Department of Veterans Affairs established the benefit in 1993 and currently has lower rates and more stringent rules than other federal survivor programs.

My Caring for Survivors Act modernizes D-I-C benefits through two reforms.

The bill raises the monthly D-I-C benefit by more than \$450 per recipient, bringing D-I-C payments in line with surviving payments that other federal civilian employees are eligible to receive.

Additionally, the bill reduces the time frame a veteran must be disabled to qualify for D-I-C benefits from 10 to 5 years.

Together, these provisions would increase D-I-C benefits and broaden eligibility to ensure families receive the financial help they deserve.

I recognize the cost concerns of implementing this legislation.

But the cost is likely lower than the reported estimate based on updated data from the Department of Veterans Affairs.

I often hear from survivors of service members and veterans in my District and across the country who depend on D-I-C benefits to cover their basic expenses.

I became interested in this because veterans and surviving spouses stop me at parades, events, and I receive e-mails from people all over the country telling me the story of what it means to them and their families.

These individuals continue to express the life-changing difference the *Caring for Survivors Act* would make, including the financial difference between barely getting by and having a small degree of security, while recognizing the sacrifice of our service members and veterans.

Supporting our veterans and military families is an intentional choice that we can make.

I encourage my colleagues on this Committee to hold a vote on my *Caring for Survivors Act* and advance the legislation to the House floor.

It would be an incredible show of support for the surviving family members of our veterans who have died in the line of service.

With that, I yield back.