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Chairwoman Julia Brownley
Subcommittee on Health
House Committee on Veterans' Affairs

Thank you, Chairwoman Brownley, for hosting this legislative hearing.

Currently, veterans with a service-connected disability or combined disability rating of 50 percent or greater are eligible to receive up to \$6,800 through the Home Improvements and Structural Alterations (HISA) grant program. Veterans with a non-service-connected disability are eligible for up to \$2,000.

H.R. 5819, the *Autonomy for Disabled Veterans Act* will increase the HISA grant maximum amount to \$10,000 for veterans with service-connected disabilities, \$5,000 for veterans with non-service-connected disabilities, and ensure the HISA grant maximum will increase with inflation as determined by the Consumer Price Index.

Due to inflation, HISA grants no longer cover the actual cost of renovations. Disabled veterans are often left with unfinished home improvement projects leading to partial accessibility in their residences. Some are not able to afford structural improvements to their homes due to the high costs of labor and consequently, many veterans struggle to do daily tasks.

Several Veteran Service Organizations (VSOs), such as the Paralyzed Veterans of America, American Legion, American Gold Star Mothers, Blinded American Veterans, Easterseals, Vietnam Veterans of America, Veterans of Foreign Wars, Disabled American Veterans, AMVETS, and the Wounded Warrior Project, support this increase of the HISA grant program and have confirmed their members experience these hardships.

H.R. 5819 has also amassed bipartisan support in the House, with a current amount of 78 cosponsors. A number of my fellow colleagues have shared that their constituency has reached out specifically about increasing the amount of the HISA grant program.

Congress last increased funding for HISA grants in 2009 – thirteen years ago. Our country's economy has drastically changed since 2009 and looking ahead, there is unpredictability in the U.S. dollar due to the economic hardships inflicted by the COVID-19 pandemic. HISA grant maximums must be increased for veterans with service-connected and non-service-connected

disabilities to ensure continued usability and assistance to the Americans that sacrificed for our country.

Thank you, Madam Chair, and Members of this Subcommittee, for the opportunity to discuss this critical legislation.

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Al Lawson". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, looping flourish at the end of the name.

Al Lawson (FL-05)