

House Committee on Armed Services
Subcommittee on Disability Assistance and Memorial Affairs
Hearing on Pending Legislation
April 10, 2024
Statement for the Record – Rep. Dean Phillips (MN-03)

Thank you, M. Chair. I would like to begin by thanking the leadership of the House Veterans Affairs Committee – Chairman Bost and Ranking Member Takano – and the Subcommittee on Disability Assistance and Memorial Affairs – Chairman Luttrell and Ranking Member Pappas. I am grateful for all you do to advocate for our nation’s veterans.

I am delighted to testify before the Subcommittee on behalf of my legislation, the *Love Lives On Act*. I thank the Subcommittee for considering this important bill and my esteemed colleague from North Carolina – Mr. Hudson – for his partnership in introducing this measure.

As a Gold Star Son, my gratitude to our servicemembers and their families is immeasurable. Spouses of those who die in service to our nation make unimaginable sacrifices and deserve unending respect and support in return. Unfortunately, surviving spouses of federal personnel risk losing survivor benefits if they remarry under the age of 55. My legislation, the *Love Lives On Act*, would ensure military spouses are allowed to retain benefits upon remarriage no matter their age. The bill’s protections extend to surviving spouses of active-duty, veteran, and retired military personnel.

I was thrilled to help pass a portion of this legislation in the Fiscal Year 2024 National Defense Authorization Act. That provision granted all remarried surviving spouses access to Commissary and Exchange benefits. This is a great start, but I will continue to push the remaining components of this legislation until we eliminate all remarriage benefit reductions for anyone whose spouse dies in service to our country.

The *Love Lives On Act* would extend other critical benefits to remarried surviving spouses, such as Survivor Benefit Plan and Dependency and Indemnity Compensation, certain electronic medical services, and education benefits under the Fry Scholarship program. These survivor benefits help us honor Gold Star families – we must ensure they receive every single benefit they are owed for their sacrifice.

Thank you very much for the opportunity to advocate for the *Love Lives on Act* and I look forward to our continued collaboration.