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Thank you, Senator Dole, for your kind words.

I know I speak for everyone here, when I say that we are truly inspired by your leadership, vision and tireless work on behalf of military caregivers. You are bringing our country's Hidden Heroes out of the shadows to honor their service. [to the Committee] And I want to thank each of you for this opportunity today.

My experience growing up in a military family helped me prepare for this role. You see, my father and both of my grandfathers served in the military. I grew up with a deep respect for our veterans and an understanding that they are our nation's real heroes.

These days, it is a privilege and a great honor to play a veteran in my latest role, as Bob Lee Swagger on USA Network's Shooter.

Now, thanks to the Elizabeth Dole Foundation, I've learned about a different kind of hero – our military caregivers. They are Hidden Heroes, family members or friends caring for warriors who return home from service with physical and emotional scars.

And today, we are here to ask for your help and urge you to take action.

And, if you know anything about Senator Dole, she doesn't take no for an answer! She will hold you – all of us – accountable. Because our nation's military and veteran caregivers deserve it.

Over a lifetime of care, military caregivers face tremendous challenges and, right now, they have very few resources to help them.

It's on all of us to fix that.

Right now, military caregivers are shouldering this responsibility of care alone. They don't expect or ask for help, but the work they do merits more than just a display of gratitude. We owe our military and veteran caregivers purposeful action and life-long support.

Something struck me in Senator Dole's remarks I want to emphasize.

The Foundation's research found that military caregivers play an essential role in the recovery process of our veterans, and in improving their quality of life.

And I quote, "The best chance for a wounded warrior to recover and thrive is having a strong, well-supported caregiver."

Yet, this role imposes a substantial physical, emotional, and financial toll on the caregivers and their families. We can do better.

This is why we're here. We need to sign into law some very important legislation.

For starters, I'm speaking specifically about the recently reintroduced Military and Veteran Caregiver Services Improvement Act – bipartisan legislation, introduced in both the House and Senate, to make expanded resources available to military and veteran caregivers of all eras.

By signing onto this bill — you will strengthen and expand vital programs that support caregivers nationwide, and ensure that caregivers are recognized for their service in tangible ways.

And, ultimately, we will have a positive impact on the health and wellbeing of our nation's veterans and military families for a long time to come.

Here's a snapshot of what the Act will do:

- The VA's caregiver program should be available to all caregivers caring for all veterans regardless of when they served. If passed, pre-9/11 military caregivers would have the same support we give to our post-9/11 caregivers. Look, Bob Dole served before 9/11. We are talking about caregivers for the heroes who served with him and the generations that followed. Their caregivers not only need but deserve our assistance.
- The Act would expand essential respite services for military caregivers. They should receive some relief from their duties. Some time off from their 24-hour a day, 7 days a week responsibility to run

errands, pick up their kids from school, or relax. They need it. Let's give it to them.

- It would better coordinate and align caregiver services across the VA system, government agencies and private services, so no matter where you live in our country, as a military caregiver, you have access to support.
- The bill would support caregivers for veterans with service-related invisible injuries, like TBI, in the same way we help caregivers with veterans who have visible wounds. It shouldn't matter whether we see the scar or not to give our veterans and caregivers the resources they need.

And finally, it provides assistance with childcare, financial advice, legal counseling, and education, which are all top, and currently unmet, needs.

As a Hidden Heroes Ambassador, I've had the privilege to meet with military caregivers across the country. As I speak before you now, I can't help but think about Megan and her husband Matt, a Marine Corps veteran who honorably served two tours in Iraq. Megan and Matt are high school sweethearts and man, when you meet them, you know it. They now live in Connecticut.

They are a young couple. They are in love. And yet, they have a long road ahead. As a result of injuries received during his combat service, Matt now suffers from a traumatic brain injury and PTSD. Megan, his wife and primary caregiver, is by his side every day, helping him as he struggles with wounds we can't see, invisible wounds that most of us in this room could never imagine.

Megan explained to me that she never pictured herself as a caregiver for her husband, especially so soon in her marriage, but Matt needs her. It is a day in and day out, 24-7 responsibility, managing doctors appointments, juggling medications, always on high alert looking out for "things" that might trigger Matt's PTSD and, all, I might add, while raising three young boys.

Megan is making the most of things, but she needs our help. In fact, there are 5.5 million military caregivers like Megan, quietly serving in

communities across America. They can no longer go it alone. They need us. They need you.

I ask you again, members of the Committee, and all of you here today, to give your full support to the military caregivers serving our nation. Senators, please sign onto the Military Caregiver Services Improvement Act and each of the pieces of legislation outlined.

To everyone here today and watching across the country, please seek out the military caregivers in your cities and towns, direct them to support and resources at HiddenHeroes.org and ask how you can help.

Thank you.