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AND RISK MANAGEMENT  
HOUSE PERMANENT SELECT COMMITTEE  
ON INTELLIGENCE

STATEMENT OF

REP. AUSTIN SCOTT (GA-08)

MEMBER DAY HEARING ON MATTERS WITHIN THE COMMITTEE'S TAX  
JURISDICTION

JANUARY 22, 2025

Chairman Smith, Ranking Member Neal, and members of the Committee, I am grateful for the opportunity to testify on behalf of an important piece of legislation that I will soon re-introduce in the 119th Congress called the Purple Heart Freedom to Work Act.

After going on a hunting trip with some combat-disabled veterans, I was disappointed to learn that our tax code penalizes combat-disabled veterans for re-entering the workforce. This is wrong and is why I have championed this bipartisan effort in the past several Congresses, and will do so again in the 119th Congress once the details are ironed out with various entities across Congress to finalize this legislation.

Currently, combat-disabled veterans who earn an income in excess of \$1,550 per month lose 100% of their Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI) for being actively engaged in the workforce. This unacceptably low limit deters workforce participation and disincentivizes injured veterans from pursuing jobs, promotions, or working overtime.

I feel they should be able to freely work in the country that they sacrificed to protect without losing the Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI) benefits that they are entitled to. Moreover, I think encouraging combat-disabled veterans to remain in the workforce will help save lives.

One of the best things we can do for veterans' mental health is to make sure they have the option to work without losing support. The suicide rate among veterans is too high – allowing them to remain in the workforce maintains their sense of dignity, self-worth, and morale. The alternative is much more bleak – staying at home and not contributing to society as much as they should be able to do, which puts them at risk.

Then Representative and now Senator Andy Kim remarked at the introduction of this important bill in the last Congress:

*"Too many veterans face barriers accessing the benefits they deserve. We must do better on our promise to have our servicemembers' backs and do more to support their continued success after they return home. I am proud to help introduce bipartisan legislation that would promote combat-disabled veterans' participation and success in the workforce without them having to worry about losing their Social Security disability benefits. With an increased income threshold, they would*

*be able to more freely pursue the careers and the well-rounded lives they want in our communities."*

There is no incentive for combat-disabled veterans to remain engaged in the workforce if they are going to lose their SSDI. This small group of people paid a high price to our country, and we owe it to them to ensure they continue to receive the benefits they have certainly earned.

I look forward to working with you, Mr. Chairman, to keep our combat-disabled veterans in the workforce. I would be remiss if I didn't thank Shaun Freiman and Ben Ridder of your staff for their help in crafting a solution that will enable our combat-disabled veterans to remain in the workforce. Thank you again for the opportunity to appear before this Committee.