**Back claim statement to support an increased rating**

The following statement is offered to support my contention that my back disabilities have increased in severity; thus, higher ratings are justified. The severity level of my back symptoms noticeably increased, on a daily basis, in April 2022 with more symptoms than my previous normal. I visited my VA primary caregiver with a complaint of increased symptoms in May 2022.

**Current back symptoms and functional limitations**

My back and lower extremity symptoms are pain, weakness, stiffness, tenderness, and radiculopathy causing pain and tingling down both of my lower extremities: these symptoms currently cause significant functional limitations. I have stopped running and all bending over exercises as both endeavors cause an exacerbation of symptoms. Even a brisk walk will exacerbate my back and lower extremity symptoms. I walk at a slow pace due to back pain and my lower extremities tire quickly limiting my walks to a duration of 15-30 minutes. I try to supplement my walking limitations with bike riding; however, due to severe lower extremity symptoms I am only able to tolerate bike riding occasionally. Sitting on any type of exercise device, including bikes, is often unbearable as the seats are too hard causing back and sciatica type pain.

Standing in place for more ten minutes is intolerable, such as standing in a long checkout line after shopping. Often, I cannot bend forward or down due to back and lower extremity pain. I can only tolerate sitting in normal chairs for a few minutes before sciatica type pain becomes intolerable. At home I use a well cushioned couch, recliner, or bed for rest. Typically, my back is under stress from walking, standing, and kneeling for 2-3 hours per day; during this time, I must have frequent rest periods due to back and sciatica pain, as well as, lower extremity weakness. By the end each day, often my back range of motion (ROM) is reduced by approximately one third.

I self-treat my back symptoms with over-the-counter pain medications, heat, and rest. Most symptoms are mitigated to tolerable levels within a few hours of selfcare. My selfcare negates the need to seek regular professional medical care for my back and lower extremity symptoms; thus, I typically do not seek treatment specifically for these problems.

**Flare ups**

Currently 1-2 days per week every week I experience back and lower extremity symptom flare-ups to varying degrees. Flare-ups are brought on by activity. Typically, my ROM is reduced by half; however, occasionally ROM is reduced by ¾ and at times ROM reduced completely; in other words, I cannot bend forward at all. On these occasions, my mobility is severely or completely limited due to pain.

During a typical flare-up standing in place for more than a couple of minutes is not possible and walking is limited to movements within my home (approximately 20 feet) such as going to the bathroom or answering the doorbell. On extreme flare-ups (typically once every two months), I am restricted to my recliner with no possibility of weight bearing and require assistance to move such as going to the restroom. Sometimes crutch use is possible. Radiculopathy also often flares at least twice monthly severely limiting my mobility and ability to sit or stand; often, I am forced to lay on my side. During radiculopathy flare ups the pain to one or both legs is 8-10 on the 10 scale.

**Diagnostics and assistive devices**

The following MRIs, X-rays, and prescribed assistive devices are relevant to my back claim; hence, I ask they be given due consideration:

1. Back MRI results dated September 5, 2021.
2. Back X-ray results dated August 25, 2021.
3. Crutches prescribed August 25, 2021.

**I CERTIFY THAT the statements on this document are true and correct to the best of my knowledge and belief.**

**Sign: Date:**