

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20510

November 15, 2021

The Honorable Adam Smith
Chairman
House Armed Services Committee
2216 Rayburn Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Mike Rogers
Ranking Member
House Armed Services Committee
2216 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Jack Reed
Chairman
Senate Armed Services Committee
228 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Jim Inhofe
Ranking Member
Senate Armed Services Committee
205 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Chairman Smith, Chairman Reed, Ranking Member Rogers and Ranking Member Inhofe:

As the House and Senate conferees negotiate the final Fiscal Year (FY) 2022 National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA), we strongly urge you to retain the sections of the House-passed NDAA (H.R. 4350) that mirror the bipartisan and bicameral Military Child Care Expansion Act of 2021 (H.R.3121, S.1572) and will improve access to child care for military families and improve child care facilities in the final bill. These bipartisan provisions are critical steps that will improve the quality of life for military families as well as improving readiness and retention.

We continue to hear from military families that finding adequate, affordable child care is a persistent challenge that adversely impacts their morale and ability to focus on the mission, and can be determinative of their willingness to continue military service. Lack of child care is likely also one of the drivers of a military spouse unemployment rate of approximately 25%,¹ which is almost five times the national average.²

Concerns about child care supply are compounded by military Child Development Center (CDC) facilities that have been allowed to deteriorate because they are consistently a low priority for the services. There are simply not enough spaces available in CDCs as evidenced by the almost 9,000 families with immediate need for child care who, nonetheless, are stuck on waiting lists for

¹ David Chrisinger, National Military Spouse Network, “Roadmap to Employment Stability for Military Spouses,” 2021. https://www.nationalmilitaryspousenetwork.org/public/images/2021_White_Paper_NMSN.pdf

² Bureau of Labor Statistics, “News Release: The Employment Situation – September 2021.” October 8, 2021. <https://www.bls.gov/news.release/pdf/empsit.pdf>

months.³ The Department of Defense also has 135 CDCs in “poor” or “failing” condition,⁴ however only 1 facility was on the Department’s FY 2022 budget request with an additional 6 facilities making it onto Unfunded Priority Lists.

We must continue to explore avenues to ease the burdens on military families caused by the unique circumstances of the military lifestyle and continue to ensure the Department treats families as a priority. We owe this to our military families. For these reasons, we urge you to retain the following provisions of H.R. 4350 in any FY 2022 NDAA conference agreement:

Sec. 626 – Expansion of Pilot Program to Provide Financial Assistance to Members of the Armed Forces for In-Home Child Care. This provision authorizes the Secretary of Defense to expand the number of locations participating in the in-home child care pilot program authorized by Sec. 689(b) of the FY 2021 NDAA. The pilot program is testing the use of fee assistance programs for in-home child care providers like nannies, and it is currently limited to five locations: San Diego, San Antonio, Hawaii, Norfolk and the National Capital Region.

Sec. 2814 – Improvement of Department of Defense Child Development Centers and Increased Availability of Child Care for Children of Military Personnel. This provision will require the service secretaries to complete safety inspections of all CDCs within one year of enactment to look for hazards like lead, asbestos and mold. It also requires the services to publish 10-year plans to renovate or replace CDCs so that none are in poor or failing condition and maintain all CDCs to prevent them from degrading into poor or failing condition, with annual progress reports. Additionally, each service secretary will be required to enter into at least one public-private partnership with a private entity to provide child care to servicemembers and civilian employees.

We commend you on your leadership and commitment to our servicemembers, and we urge you to preserve these bipartisan provisions in the final FY 2022 NDAA conference agreement.

Sincerely,

			
Tammy Duckworth U.S. Senator	Jackie Speier Member of Congress	Stephanie Bice Member of Congress	Sara Jacobs Member of Congress

³ Department of Defense, “Report to the Congressional Defense Committees on Department of Defense Child Development Programs,” June 2020.

⁴ Ibid.

Co-signers:

Senator Kirsten Gillibrand
Senator Michael F. Bennet
Senator Patty Murray
Senator Ron Wyden

Rep. Karen Bass
Rep. Julia Brownley
Rep. Joaquin Castro
Rep. Angie Craig
Rep. Charlie Crist
Rep. Veronica Escobar
Rep. Adriano Espaillat
Rep. Lois Frankel
Rep. Raúl M. Grijalva
Rep. Chrissy Houlahan
Rep. Kaiiali'i Kahele
Rep. Derek Kilmer
Rep. Brenda L. Lawrence
Rep. Andy Levin
Rep. Elaine G. Luria
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Rep. Doris Matsui
Rep. James P. McGovern
Rep. Grace Meng
Rep. Seth Moulton
Rep. Eleanor Holmes Norton
Rep. Jamie Raskin
Rep. Deborah K. Ross
Rep. Dina Titus
Rep. Rashida Tlaib
Rep. Nikema Williams