

**THE STATUS OF MILITARY RECRUITING AND  
RETENTION EFFORTS ACROSS THE DEPART-  
MENT OF DEFENSE**

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**HEARING**

BEFORE THE

SUBCOMMITTEE ON  
PERSONNEL

OF THE

COMMITTEE ON ARMED SERVICES  
UNITED STATES SENATE

ONE HUNDRED SEVENTEENTH CONGRESS

SECOND SESSION

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SEPTEMBER 21, 2022  
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**THE STATUS OF MILITARY RECRUITING AND  
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DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE**

**WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 21, 2022**

UNITED STATES SENATE,  
SUBCOMMITTEE ON PERSONNEL,  
COMMITTEE ON ARMED SERVICES,  
*Washington, DC.*

The Subcommittee met, pursuant to notice, at 3:38 p.m. in room SR-222, Russell Senate Office Building, Senator Kirsten E. Gillibrand (Chairwoman of the Subcommittee) presiding.

Committee Members present: Senators Gillibrand, Hirono, Warren, Tillis, Hawley, and Tuberville.

**OPENING STATEMENT OF SENATOR KIRSTEN E. GILLIBRAND**

Senator GILLIBRAND. Good morning, everyone.

The Personnel Subcommittee meets today to receive testimony on the current State of military personnel recruiting and retention in the Department of Defense.

Let me start by welcoming Senator Tillis, Ranking Member of this Subcommittee. Senator Tillis, in particular, has shown great interest in ensuring our military has what it needs to recruit and retain the best people that our country has to offer and I want to thank him for his leadership on this issue.

I look forward to working with Senator Tillis to help find ways to facilitate both recruiting and retention in the military services.

Our military faces headwinds in its effort to attract and retain quality recruits. By the end of 2022, the active U.S. military will be at its smallest size since the creation of the all-volunteer force for which we mark the 50th anniversary next year.

All four military services here today have signaled significant concerns about the strength of their recruiting operations and their prospects for success in 2023.

The Army, in particular, has said—has had a very difficult year. With 9 days remaining in the fiscal year the Army reports it has met only 70 percent of its fiscal year 2022 Active Duty recruiting goal and that is on track to miss its recruiting target by up to 30,000 soldiers.

The troubling drop in military accession comes at a time of global uncertainty brought on by COVID-19, rising inflation, unprovoked Russian military aggression.

As the security environment becomes more unstable, it is critical that our military remains fully equipped to meet the challenges of our day.

At the same time, we know that America's youth have a historically low level of interest in military service and enjoy a highly favorable job market, which makes it even more difficult to recruit and retain highly skilled personnel.

We also know that some critical skill capabilities are especially at risk, including billets in cyber operations, intelligence, and electronic warfare.

As our military looks to fill positions in these fields, I challenge the services to think outside the box. Creating new career paths, offering innovative pay and incentive structures, and realigning some capabilities from military to civilian workforces should all be on the table.

I know that America's military is by far the best fighting force in the world and that our servicemembers are overwhelmingly proud to serve.

Paradoxically, the recent drop in military recruiting has coincided with historically high retention rates across all our services. The statistics you have provided show clear evidence that those members who have joined the military are more likely than ever before to remain in uniform by choice.

But decades of hard-fought conflict in Iraq and Afghanistan have created a perception that service in the military leaves people broken, damaged, or disadvantaged in society.

In reality, I know from my many interactions with our servicemembers and veterans the majority report positive experiences in the military, positive post-military outcomes, and are proud of their service.

They end up with more education, higher household income, and greater levels of civic engagement than their peers who did not enter military service, and veteran unemployment is lower than the general unemployment rate across the country.

Our military has wonderful things to offer, from high-tech skills building, leadership training, camaraderie and friendship, generous civilian education benefits, and robust family support programs.

I want to know what we can do to help the military recruit the best and brightest people into service. I am looking forward to hearing from today's witnesses on this topic. We have one panel today featuring human resource experts from DOD and each military service.

Witnesses on our panel include Dr. Stephanie Miller, Deputy Assistant Secretary for Defense for Military Personnel Policy; Lieutenant General Douglas F. Stitt, Deputy Chief of Staff, G-1 United States Army; Vice Admiral Rick J. Cheeseman, Jr., Deputy Chief of Naval Operations for Personnel Manpower Training, United States Navy; Lieutenant General Caroline Miller, Deputy Chief of Staff for Manpower, Personnel, and Services, United States Air Force; Dr. Michael R. Strobl, Acting Deputy Commandant for Manpower and Reserve Affairs.

Again, I welcome the witnesses today. Thank you for appearing and thank you for your testimony. Thank you, most of all, for your service. We are deeply grateful.

Senator Tillis?

**STATEMENT OF SENATOR THOM TILLIS**

Senator TILLIS. Thank you, Madam Chair, and I want to thank you for the work that we have done on this committee for several years now, and I look forward to doing more work in the remainder of this Congress and in the future.

At our subcommittee hearing last year, I said I was worried that the current challenges in military recruiting represented a long-term threat to the all-volunteer force. Over the summer, I think things have gotten worse and there is no sunlight on the horizon.

It is becoming clear the all-volunteer force that has served our country well for the last 50 years is at an inflection point.

While only the Army is in the unfortunate position of missing its recruiting goal this year, the truth of the matter is unless we do things differently—and do things for the better, I believe every service except for the Space Force is at risk of missing the recruiting mission over the next year, and we need to act.

I hope you use this hearing to separate the truth from fiction of what is actually causing Americans to take a pass on serving their country.

There is no shortage of misleading information related to military service. Members of Congress, the media, and even military and veteran community all contribute to these disproportionately negative and often inaccurate portrayals of military service.

The result of these prevailing narratives is a misinformed American public who do not know much about the military but what they do know is mostly incorrect.

According to the DOD surveys of potential recruits, the top two reasons young people give for not joining the military are the possibility of physical injury or death and the possibility of PTSD or other emotional psychological issues.

The truth, of course, is that the vast majority of those who join the military come out and much better for their service. A recent peer-reviewed paper by the Quarterly Journal of Economics found that enlisting in the Army increases cumulative earnings, post-secondary education attendance, homeownership, and marriage.

While there are some jobs in the military that can be dangerous, most people serve without being exposed to any more danger than the average American does on a worksite. And while I am glad we are turning a corner in the way we talk and care about those who have PTSD and TBI [traumatic brain injury], I am certain that the risks posed by these conditions should not dissuade otherwise interested Americans from enlisting.

One unfortunate trend that is undoubtedly harming recruiting is the politicization of the military for partisan gain. The military is not full of woke warriors or extremists.

Americans of all political persuasions should feel supported in serving their country and, unfortunately, some indications suggest that is just not the case.

I look forward to hearing from the witnesses today to figure out how we can work together to better prepare you to make your recruiting goals and better inform future recruits about the wonderful opportunity that they could have in military service.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

Senator GILLIBRAND. Thank you, Mr. Ranking Member.

The Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW) and the National Guard Bureau have asked us to enter their position papers into the record and, without objection, it is so admitted.

[The prepared statement by Veterans of Foreign Wars follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT BY BRITTANY DYMOND, ASSOCIATE DIRECTOR NATIONAL  
LEGISLATIVE SERVICE VETERANS OF FOREIGN WARS OF THE UNITED STATES

Chairwoman Gillibrand, Ranking Member Tillis, and members of the subcommittee, on behalf of the men and women of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States (VFW) and its Auxiliary, thank you for the opportunity to provide our remarks on this vital topic.

Today's hearing is about people. Our military is often discussed in terms of its overwhelming strength and ability to deter adversaries around the world. The United States Armed Forces serve simultaneously as the world's police force in the face of aggression as well as its humanitarian response team in the aftermath of disaster. Recruiting advertisements showcasing our ships, airplanes, and advanced weapons systems regularly cross our electronic screens. Yet, it is the people of our military who give it its strength and its reputation as a force of consequence. Without the brave Americans who step forward to employ these resources, the effectiveness of our military will inevitably wane. The people of our military are its greatest asset and must be prioritized accordingly.

WHO SERVES?

A 2022 survey conducted by the National Military Family Association (NMFA) and Bloom revealed that forty-four percent of military teens intend to serve in the military. This is in stark contrast to just 10 percent of the general population between the ages of 16 to twenty-one identified by a Department of Defense (DOD) survey roughly a year prior. With these findings in mind, it is vital that DOD focuses not only on attracting non-military-affiliated recruits, but also nurturing the future recruits within today's military families.

The DOD Fall 2021 Propensity Update data show that the inclination to serve among the Nation's youth is at a low not seen since 2007. Survey respondents indicated that the top three of ten reasons to serve are monetary compensation, having future education paid for, and travel opportunities. Conversely, the lowest reported factor was the desire to impact one's community. Overall, eight out of the ten primary reasons to serve were individual, predominantly tangible benefits, while the remaining two reasons were intangible benefits rooted in altruism. Accordingly, while an ideal recruit might be drawn to the military out of a sense of duty and selfless service, most are attracted by the benefits of service that enable self-development and sustainment.

In consideration of the prevalent factors that attract recruits, the VFW believes Congress must ensure military benefits such as pay, health care, tuition assistance, and retirement are competitive with the private sector, continuously improved, and come without cost increases to members and families as applicable. The fact that DOD relies upon and regularly offers recruitment and retention bonuses to maintain its ranks indicates basic pay scales are not sufficiently attractive.

QUALITY OF LIFE

Equally important to the tangible benefits of military service is quality of life. Like any occupation, benefit packages will always fall short if individuals' basic needs, or those of their family members, are inconsistently satisfied. Not only do quality of life issues affect the retention decisions of those currently serving, but negative experiences and public perceptions also affect recruitment of future generations.

As previously highlighted, children of military personnel are more likely to serve than their civilian peers. Accordingly, it is to DOD's advantage to ensure military children do not experience avoidable negative circumstances during childhood. The VFW believes Congress and DOD must fervently address and improve factors that affect personnel and family quality of life.

SEXUAL ASSAULT AND HARASSMENT

Last year's sweeping Uniform Code of Military Justice (UCMJ) reforms represented a tremendous step forward in the efforts to eradicate sexual assault and

harassment from the ranks. However, this is still a major issue as seen in DOD's Fiscal Year 2021 Annual Report on Sexual Assault in the Military. DOD's Fall 2021 Propensity Update data revealed that nearly a third of potential recruits worried about possible sexual assault and/or harassment if they were to join the military. This is unconscionable. The VFW understands that the UCMJ reforms and recommendations of the 2021 Independent Review Commission on Sexual Assault in the Military will take time to implement. We urge Congress to fully fund these efforts on time, exercise stringent oversight, and identify early implementation opportunities where feasible.

#### HOUSING

Military housing quality is inconsistent and unreliable. Highlighted in the news as recently as last week, unsafe living conditions like black mold continue to plague our service members in both unaccompanied and family housing. Lack of hot water, fuel-tainted drinking water, and heating, ventilation, and air conditioning issues have also surfaced recently. These challenges are widespread across the services and globe, including permanent duty stations overseas. With prominent well-being and health implications for service members and families, substandard housing is an urgent readiness issue. Service members cannot focus wholly on the mission if they or their loved ones are suffering from medical conditions related to prolonged toxic exposure, cannot take hot showers, or lack air conditioning during hot weather.

The VFW understands various efforts are underway to renovate and rebuild affected military housing units. However, repairing or replacing the structures themselves is just one part of the equation. Military personnel and families should never be solely at the mercy of private companies or military leadership to resolve their housing problems. Without quality, consistent, and prompt attention and resources committed to housing issues across the board, service members and families must have an alternative way to communicate housing issues to those in positions of power.

Currently, no military member has a trusted, centralized third-party option to report poor housing conditions. This means that when maintenance and complaint protocols at the lowest levels fail, issues can go unresolved with little to no recourse for those affected. As a result, service members have found that posting to social media or online message boards can be a more effective means of getting results. This is completely unacceptable.

Through Section 3016 of Public Law 116-92, National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) for fiscal year 2020, Congress mandated that DOD establish a public-facing complaint data base for those residing in privatized military housing units. This data base has yet to come to fruition even though it is urgently needed. Moreover, while the VFW believes this is a step in the right direction, the law does not include single service members living in unaccompanied housing such as barracks. About 47 percent of military personnel are single without dependents, which largely precludes them from moving out of barracks. Therefore, a significant portion of service members will be prohibited from using this data base even though they experience many of the same living conditions as those seen in privatized family units. This creates a glaring inequity among military personnel experiencing housing problems. Being married or having dependents should not dictate whether or not a complaint can be reported.

The VFW urges Congress to either amend Section 3016 of Public Law 116-92 to include unaccompanied housing, or pass legislation like H.R. 7144 to create a public-facing complaint data base that all service members can use, regardless of whether they live in barracks or privatized family housing.

#### FOOD SECURITY

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) defines food security as consistent access to enough food for an active and healthy life. A 2021 Military Family Advisory Network survey showed that 18.4 percent of currently serving military families experienced low or very low food security in the 12 months prior to the survey. A separate 2020 study by Blue Star Families (BSF) revealed that junior enlisted families (ranks E1-E4) were the most impacted group at twenty-nine percent, though enlisted families of all ranks reported some level of food insecurity.

Food insecurity within the ranks is an issue of national security since it directly impacts recruiting and retention. In general, lack of regular access to enough food can lead to poor long-term health outcomes such as chronic diseases, stress, and weight gain. For children, food insecurity can adversely impact childhood development, lead to more frequent hospitalizations, and create behavioral and mental

health issues. As mentioned previously, military children exhibit a higher propensity to serve than their civilian counterparts. With so many enlisted families experiencing food insecurity, we must consider the likelihood that the physical eligibility of some of our most promising future recruits has been and is being compromised.

A 2022 NMFA survey of military teens found that 46 percent of participants had some level of difficulty accessing food in the previous month. Without considering fitness for military service, the experiences of this group may discourage them from joining as they seek alternative career paths with less perceived risk. More broadly, prospective recruits with families may not consider a military career if they are worried about potential food insecurity. Both instances result in the loss of prospective talent, undermining our Nation's efforts to attract the best and brightest.

From a retention perspective, food insecurity has been associated with a decreased likelihood of staying in the military. While low base pay is an obvious variable, high rates of spouse un- and underemployment due to frequent relocations, licensing challenges, and child care issues also lead to lost household income and hampered spouse career growth both during and after service.

The VFW praises Congress' creation of a Basic Needs Allowance (BNA) for low-income military families as part of the fiscal year 2022 NDAA. One area of concern, however, is the inclusion of Basic Allowance for Housing (BAH) in the BNA eligibility calculation. While DOD can exempt all or part of BAH from the BNA calculation in "high cost" areas, there is no guarantee that all families in need will qualify. Per a 2021 Government Accountability Office report, BAH rates are not always accurate. Moreover, BAH is now paid at only 95 percent of calculated housing costs. Thus, even when BAH rates are set correctly, families must still partially pay out of pocket for housing, challenging low-income families who are on the verge of or are already experiencing food insecurity. The VFW urges Congress to ensure high cost areas are accurately identified, exempted, and periodically reviewed to ensure families in need of BNA receive it in a timely manner.

Complicating matters is the fact that many military families do not qualify for State and Federal assistance benefits, like the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP). This occurs because USDA factors in BAH to determine families' benefit eligibility. The VFW urges Congress to pass S. 3781, which would exempt BAH from the USDA's SNAP eligibility calculation.

#### PERSONNEL AND FAMILY STABILITY

While leaving one's home of record and deploying are inherent parts of military service, the lifestyle of frequent moves between duty stations is challenging. A 2021 BSF survey of military families revealed that in addition to military pay, permanent changes of station are a top-five issue for active duty families. With regard to military children, frequent moves often mean difficulties maintaining relationships and challenges with education, which can negatively impact their well-being and increase stress on service members.

Many stressors are associated with moving such as out-of-pocket costs, changing of schools for children, finding new housing for those who qualify, transferring medical care, and seeking new employment for spouses. Relocations can be particularly difficult during periods of inflation and for families enrolled in the Exceptional Family Member Program. The VFW recommends expanding opportunities for homesteading across all services as a solution to this problem.

Not only would this decrease costs for DOD and service members, but it would help to mitigate the strain that relocations put on personnel and families. We believe this could also help ensure military children do not develop a negative view of service during their formative years, thereby maintaining or increasing the propensity to serve among this population.

#### PRIORITIZING TRANSITION TO BOLSTER RECRUITING

Public perception of veterans in communities matters. At the September 2022 Military-Civilian Transition Summit, DOD's Military-Civilian Transition Office Director Mike Miller, remarked passionately about the importance of transition as it directly translates to military readiness. He illustrated the influential power that thriving veterans can have on younger generations' decisions to serve. When transitioned successfully, veterans at school, work, or social events are essentially Ambassadors of the high-quality citizens the military develops and returns to communities.

The opposite is also true. Homeless veterans, as well as those exhibiting mental health crises, can serve as a deterrent to those considering military service. Following closely behind the prospect of injury or death, DOD's Fall 2021 Propensity

Update data showed that the “possibility of PTSD or other emotional/psychological issues” is the second most cited reason not to serve. It seems reasonable that persistent headlines around veteran suicide worsens this widely held concern of potential recruits, and likely that of their families. This means the services’ presence on social media, creation of eye-catching content, and sustained recruiting efforts in communities will only take them so far.

Congress must ensure that DOD invests in service members’ overall well-being and transition readiness throughout the whole life cycle of their career, whether it is 4 years or 20 years. This includes but is not limited to ensuring personnel receive appropriate certifications that translate directly to the civilian sector, are afforded the time and resources required by law to prepare for and attend all elements of the Transition Assistance Program, and are seamlessly connected to their veteran benefits after service. Transition preparation must be a career-long endeavor that is championed by all levels of DOD leadership, not just a series of boxes to be checked by a separation or retirement date. Our service members and their successors deserve no less.

#### REQUIREMENT TO LIVE IN UNDESIRABLE LOCATIONS

A condition of service is living where the needs of the military lie. However, Congress can strive to ensure that the needs of service members can be met equitably across the force. The VFW is concerned that recent divergences between State and Federal policies could exacerbate one of the primary deterrents associated with volunteering for military service. DOD’s Fall 2021 Propensity Update data highlighted that nearly a third of potential recruits are apprehensive about being placed in locations in which they do not want to live. As such, we will be monitoring the results of the 2022 propensity data to identify any shift in this statistic, and hope recent policy changes do not negatively affect recruitment.

As a nation reliant on an all-volunteer military force, efforts to address recruiting challenges must be comprehensive and methodical. Military service must be an attractive endeavor in terms of both benefits and quality of life. The experiences of past and present service members and families affect the decisions of those who might chose to follow them.

Chairwoman Gillibrand, Ranking Member Tillis, this concludes my testimony. I am prepared to answer any questions you or the subcommittee members may have.

[The prepared statement by General Daniel R. Hokanson, Chief, National Guard Bureau follows:]

#### PREPARED STATEMENT BY GENERAL DANIEL R. HOKANSON, CHIEF, NATIONAL GUARD BUREAU

Chairman Gillibrand, Ranking Member Tillis, and distinguished Members of the Subcommittee, I appreciate the opportunity to comment on the State of recruiting within the National Guard.

Whenever I visit the states, territories, and District of Columbia that comprise our National Guard, I make it a point to meet with our recruiters. These dedicated men and women have one of the most important jobs in our military—to ensure our Nation has the personnel we need to fight and win our Nation’s wars. These recruiters have told me, in no uncertain terms, they are currently facing the most arduous recruiting environment in more than 20 years.

For fiscal year 2022, the Air National Guard achieved 97 percent of its end strength, 3,300 short of its 108,300 fiscal year 2022 authorized strength and the Army National Guard 98.1 percent, 6,000 short of its 336,000 fiscal year 2022 authorized strength. Both are considered successful accomplishments given today’s challenging recruiting environment.

All branches of the military face recruiting challenges, and the National Guard is no different. Every recruit weighs the benefits of their service against how military service impacts their lives and their families. The reserve component’s advantage is balance—service to the Nation and the ability to have a civilian career without the full-time commitment of the Active forces.

In my conversations with servicemembers throughout the 54 States, Territories and District of Columbia, I’ve consistently heard three specific concerns provided from currently serving Guardsmen and those we are trying to recruit:

First, National Guard members and recruits are concerned about access to healthcare. I am committed to working with the Administration and Congress to implement actions we can take now to assist current members and those considering joining the National Guard with identifying current healthcare options that meet

their needs at their income level. My staff is also working with the Department to develop potential healthcare options that could improve Guard unit readiness.

Second, they are interested in obtaining Federal financial aid in addition to the significant Federal education benefits of tuition assistance and the Post 9/11 GI Bill. We need to better understand their financial aid concerns and then work with our colleagues in the Department of Education to determine how we can address these concerns and potentially identify current financial aid opportunities for which they are not aware.

Third, we need to identify new and innovative ways to recruit people to join the National Guard to ensure we can meet our end strength requirements, especially during this current period where we have fallen short of our recruiting goal. We are considering new programs that would involve more of our force than our current recruiting personnel. We understand that any new program would have to consider lessons learned from the problematic National Guard Recruiting Assistance Program. I guarantee that for any new program, the chain of command will be directly involved in overseeing the execution of the program.

We continue to work to improve all aspects of the National Guard culture to make service more appealing and inclusive. This includes fostering an environment that values education and understands the importance of mental and physical well-being. An important part of this change is the implementation of the Independent Review Commission's recommendation to establish a prevention workforce.

I appreciate the opportunity to comment on this critical issue, and look forward to working with the Subcommittee and your congressional colleagues to find solutions that strengthen and serve the Soldiers and Airmen of the National Guard.

Senator GILLIBRAND. I would now like to hear from Ms. Miller for your opening statement.

**STATEMENT OF STEPHANIE MILLER, DEPUTY ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF DEFENSE FOR MILITARY PERSONNEL POLICY**

Ms. MILLER. Thank you.

Chairwoman Gillibrand, Ranking Member Tillis, and distinguished members of the subcommittee, I appreciate the opportunity to appear before you to discuss the current and future State of military recruiting and retention.

As fiscal year 2022 comes to a close, the Department anticipates we will, collectively, miss our annual recruiting mission, despite assessing more than 170,000 remarkable young men and women.

Our shortfall constitutes an unprecedented mission gap and is reason for concern for the greater State of national service. Recruiting shortfalls are not merely a DOD issue but a national one.

As we will discuss today, there is no one silver bullet or specific action that the Department or the Services can take to quickly resolve the current challenges.

But we must focus on galvanizing our citizens, both youth and influencers, on the merit and value of contributing to the country's well being through military service.

Changing this dynamic requires involvement from Members of Congress, veterans, teachers, coaches, as well as parents, grandparents, and other influencers because the military is more important than ever to ensure power projection that allows for individual freedoms, promotes free trade, protects human rights, and the rule of law across the globe.

However, the portrayal of the mission and what service looks like for military members and their families is often skewed in the media and in the minds of the current generation of youth.

The next generation of Americans to serve should know that there has never been a better time for them to choose military service. Our data indicates that Generation Z is primarily driven

by purpose, relationships, and a clear path to success. We can offer all three.

Purpose—they can apply passion for change in military service and make a global impact protecting freedom. From medical training and humanitarian aid to cyber technology to leadership under pressure, servicemembers find personal fulfillment serving in every part of the world and responding with skills to truly make a difference every day.

Relationships—military service provides a connection between members, an esprit de corps that simply does not have a parallel in civilian sectors.

A clear path to success—military service affords a wide range of career opportunities where we will individually challenge them to reach peak potential while also providing a clear path to succeed, and along the way they will see and do things that most Americans never will.

Additionally, we provide our servicemembers competitive pay packages with unprecedented opportunities for continued training and education. In short, we offer the things that Generation Z looks for when choosing a career, but in many respects they just do not know it.

While a picture of the current recruiting environment is difficult, the Services and the Department are actively committed to overcoming recruiting challenges through strong collaboration and innovative thought.

Congress can help our efforts by improving high school access where high schools are incentivized to grant predictable and regular access to recruiters and support to the Career Exploration Program, updating authorities for targeted marketing and advertising to ensure our messages are uniquely tailored to diverse audiences with multifaceted interests, an on time budget approval with consideration of 2-year funding for marketing and advertising for earlier media buys, which would not only maximize critical taxpayer resources through reduced price purchasing but also give recruitment advertising a more competitive advantage in an already crowded market.

In conclusion, I want to thank the members of this subcommittee for taking the time to focus on this critical issue and the continued advocacy by the members and their staffs on behalf of the men and women of the Department of Defense.

We appreciate your continued support for funding the programs that keep the force and their families safe, strong, and healthy. I look forward to your questions.

[The prepared statement of Ms. Stephanie P. Miller follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT BY MS. STEPHANIE P. MILLER

Chairwoman Gillibrand, Ranking Member Tillis, and distinguished Members of the Subcommittee, I appreciate the opportunity to appear before you this afternoon to discuss the current and future state of military recruiting.

Next year we will commemorate the fiftieth anniversary of the All-Volunteer Force. Since its inception, the All-Volunteer Force has performed remarkably well both during periods of relative calm and times of protracted conflict. The All-Volunteer Force continues to be the strongest and most-respected military force in the world. Our people remain the cornerstone of this success. The Military Services have sustained the All-Volunteer Force by recruiting exemplary young men and women from across our Nation. The diverse backgrounds of our servicemembers aid

immeasurably to finding solutions to the many complex national security issues the Department contends with around the globe.

Since 1973, the continued success of our All-Volunteer Force begins with recruiting, while the viability of the force is assured with successful retention. Today, retention efforts remain strong across the Services. The Services' recruiting programs, however, are facing perhaps the greatest challenges since their inception. While fiscal year 2022 has not yet closed, the Department anticipates we will collectively miss our recruiting mission despite accessing more than 170,000 remarkable young men and women. This constitutes an unprecedented mission gap and is reason for concern.

In assessing our recruiting marketing conditions, a number of factors have coalesced to create a uniquely challenging environment. However, there is no "silver bullet" or specific action that the Department and Services can take to quickly resolve the current recruiting challenge. A variety of circumstances contribute to the growing military-civilian divide, including the shrinking/disappearing military footprint, a declining Veteran presence across society, and the uninformed and often misguided influence of military-related messaging by external organizations. These external messages unduly highlight the risks of military service, keeping the physical and psychological risks of military service foremost in the minds of today's youth and their influencers.

Combined, these factors have led to a youth market which is generally disinterested or unaware of the real and intrinsic value of military service. Additionally, generationally low unemployment, the residual impact of the COVID pandemic, limited recruiter access to schools for over two years, and increasing opportunities available to today's youth further exacerbate the difficult recruiting challenges the Department currently faces. While we have faced recruiting challenges in the past, they were often isolated to one or two Services and relatively short in duration. The current recruiting challenge appears much broader and will require significant effort to resolve long term.

#### RECRUITING MARKET CONDITIONS

Data shows nearly 77 percent of our youth are not qualified for military service without some type of waiver. It is important to note there is no single condition or factor that if changed would significantly improve the number of qualified youth. Today, nearly 44 percent of youth are ineligible as a result of multiple factors. The most prevalent disqualification criteria among youth is for being overweight (11%); increasing obesity rates continue to be a nation-wide trend which does not bode well for military recruiting. The Department is examining our standards and entry programs, but alone, there is very little we can do to positively impact this issue.

Compounding the issue of eligibility, data indicates many youth are not interested in military service and those that are have many misconceptions about what life is like as a servicemember. Data from the Joint Advertising and Market Research and Studies (JAMRS) program indicates only 9 percent of youth are propensed to serve in the military, a decline of 3 percentage points since Spring of 2019, and represents approximately 1 million fewer youth likely to join the military in the next few years. Additionally, for the first time, the majority of youth (52 percent) have never even considered the military as an option.

Furthermore, the proportion of youth who make positive associations with military service has also declined. In 2004, 63 percent of youth believed the military offered an attractive lifestyle.<sup>1</sup> Today, only 33 percent of youth do so.<sup>2</sup> In 2004, 85 percent of youth believed the military would help them earn money for college, whereas now only 60 percent of youth associate military service with earning money for college. Of greater concern is the number of youth who believe military service will harm them in some way, with 57 percent of 16 to 24 year olds believing someone getting out of the military will have some "form of psychological or emotional problem" and 50 percent believing those getting out will have difficulty adjusting to everyday life. These factors – youth disinterest and misperceptions of military service – are the greatest market dynamics shaping recruiting outcomes today.

#### ELECTRONIC HEALTH RECORDS, MHS GENESIS

This hearing provides an opportunity to highlight the many innovative practices implemented across the Department, particularly by the Military Services, to modernize the accession enterprise. One such initiative is the introduction of the Department's electronic health record system, MHS GENESIS, into the accession pipe-

<sup>1</sup> Source: JAMRS Youth Tracking Survey

<sup>2</sup> Source: JAMRS Youth Tracking Survey

line. The introduction of MHS GENESIS is perhaps the most significant change to our recruiting enterprise in the history of the All-Volunteer Force. It moves the enterprise away from the legacy process of relying on paper medical records to digital, consistent with the shift across the United States health infrastructure, enabling more reliable and informed medical qualification decisions across the Department.

However, with big IT changes comes the need for big process changes. In making that pivot it is understandable the Department experienced a temporary productivity loss; however, can report that MHS GENESIS is working as intended and positively contributing to the long term readiness of our military forces. The Department continues to refine workforce and electronic processes to increase the capacity of the new system in conjunction with our Federal agency and commercial partners. It is often difficult to find an ideal time to introduce a system change of this magnitude, but after careful consideration and coordination with all stakeholders, it was determined now was the right time. This was simply the right thing to do both for the Department and the individuals considering military service.

#### RESPONDING TO MARKET CHALLENGES

While the picture of the current recruiting environment is difficult, the Services and the Department are working together to resolve these issues. Deputy Secretary of Defense Hicks and other Department senior leaders are actively engaged and continue to develop appropriate courses of action to address the current recruiting challenges, both in the short-term and strategically into the future. The traditional levers used to bolster recruiting are enlistment bonuses, recruit marketing and advertising, and recruiter manning. While these are time-tested, the Services continue to explore ways to improve the effectiveness of each.

Enlistment bonuses are used to attract youth to serve in certain skills and to ensure efficient use of Service training capacity. Each Service has reviewed and adjusted its bonus offerings to address recruiting or skill shortfalls.

In order to be effective, marketing campaigns today must be more complex than in the past. The youth and influencers of today consume information differently, typically from multiple sources and platforms. While the legacy mediums (television ads, radio ads, and print) still serve a purpose, they must be complimented with myriad different sources. Digital media must be a significant component of these campaigns. The Department and Services continue to navigate the ever-changing digital landscape to expand the reach of these messages. Consumers, however, have the ability to tune out unwanted messages, making it more difficult to ensure positive messages regarding military service are heard.

Leveraging large sources of available data to gain access to more information and insights about potential recruits will enable more efficient use of limited resources. Privacy concerns and current laws, however, limit the use of this data, resulting in the Services having to rely on private sector vendors to take advantage of this technology, and this reliance comes at a premium. Our inability to leverage technology advancements has reduced the visibility of our messages, making it harder and costlier to reach today's youth.

The final lever, recruiter manning, is more nuanced. On average it takes between one year to 18 months to identify, select, train, and assign recruiters, and even longer for them to become productive. These recruiting professionals come at the expense of the manning in the broader force. The Services must make difficult decisions regarding the right balance between meeting recruiter manning demands without adverse operational impact. Currently, there are a number of understaffed military specialties whose population is limited for recruiter duty. As a result, some Services have begun to recall previously successful recruiters on a temporary duty basis or have extended the length of duty for currently assigned recruiters who are successful. We continue to look for other efficiencies and mitigation strategies cautiously to avoid unintended impacts.

#### LONG TERM FORECAST

We are committed to overcoming recruiting challenges of uncertain severity or duration through strong collaboration with the Services, innovative thought, and reexamination of processes and resources by all recruiting stakeholders. We also recognize the fierce competition for technical and innovative talent and will continue to invest in human capital initiatives to compete for, hire, develop, and retain highly skilled experts in the ever-changing talent acquisition landscape. As leaders we must proactively take steps to close the ever-widening military-civilian gap; encourage a national spirit of service, our collective and individual responsibility to maintain the combat-credible military force needed to deter war; and protect the security of our Nation. The Department must communicate these intrinsic benefits of mili-

tary service and how those benefits can help today's youth achieve their personal goals.

While the recruiting environment is difficult, and FY 2023 shows no immediate signs of improving, I am confident the professionals in our recruiting force, whether it is the boots-on-the-ground recruiters or the senior leaders, will find a way as they always have to restore the stability of military recruiting and ensure the sustainment of the All-Volunteer Force.

Finally, I want to thank you and the members of this Subcommittee for providing the opportunity to address this critical issue. I also want to thank you for your continued advocacy on behalf of the men and women of the Department of Defense and their families.

I look forward to your questions.

Senator GILLIBRAND. Thank you, Ms. Miller.

We are now prepared to hear from Lieutenant General Stitt.

**STATEMENT OF LIEUTENANT GENERAL DOUGLAS STITT,  
DEPUTY CHIEF OF STAFF, G-1 UNITED STATES ARMY**

Lieutenant General STITT. Chairwoman Gillibrand, Ranking Member Tillis, distinguished members of this committee, thank you for the opportunity and the honor to testify on behalf of the soldiers of the United States Army today.

America's military currently faces the most challenging recruiting environment since the inception of the all-volunteer force in 1973.

These unprecedented recruiting challenges are driven in part by a low national unemployment rate, a strong job market, intense competition with the private sector, and a declining number of young Americans interested in and qualified for uniform service.

Currently, only 23 percent of 17- to 24-year-old Americans are fully qualified to serve. The top disqualifiers for service are obesity, addiction, conduct, test scores, medical and behavioral health conditions.

The Army is taking strong actions to ensure we have a ready force comprised of cohesive teams of fit, trained, and disciplined soldiers. All initiatives are designed to increase our accessions of qualified candidates under three guiding principles.

We will not sacrifice quality for quantity. We will not lower our standards. We will invest in America's youth so that those who want to serve can meet our standards.

The United States Army exists for one purpose, to protect the Nation by fighting and winning our Nation's wars as a member of the Joint Force. Our readiness to fight and win depends on a quality all-volunteer force.

We have high standards for our soldiers and that will not change. But we are committed to removing barriers to service. We want to give individuals who want to be the opportunity to be all they can be while serving in the United States Army.

Chairwoman Gillibrand, Ranking Member Tillis, distinguished members of this committee, thank you for your support to the soldiers of the United States Army. We are committed to working collaboratively with this committee and with Congress as a whole to help us maintain the Army as the world's premier fighting force.

I look forward to your questions.

[The prepared statement of General Douglas Stitt follows:]

## PREPARED STATEMENT BY LIEUTENANT GENERAL DOUGLAS STITT

Chairwoman Gillibrand, Ranking Member Tillis, distinguished Members of this Committee, thank you for the opportunity testify on behalf of the men and women of the United States Army.

The Army's number one priority is our people—our soldiers, Army civilians, families, and soldiers for life—and their contribution to combat readiness. All the Army's personnel programs and initiatives are focused on taking care of our people. The men and women of the United States Army stand ready to fight and win our Nation's wars as a member of the Joint Force, and I could not be more proud of each and every one of them.

We win because of our people. They are our competitive edge, our greatest strength, and our most valuable resource. Today we are in a war for talent. To win this war, we must make the call to military service attractive to and attainable for our Nation's youth.

## END STRENGTH

Declining accessions has led to a decrease in Army end strength. We estimate that the Army will end fiscal year 2022 with an end strength of approximately 466,000 below our target of 476,000 soldiers in the active component. We also project that our end strength will likely continue to decrease in fiscal year 2023, with current estimates of an end strength of approximately 445,000 to 452,000 by the end of fiscal year 2023. These estimates are using old recruiting practices, but the Army is engaging on an enterprise-wide effort to improve recruiting, which should improve these numbers. Though it will take time, our objective is to regrow our end strength to 460,000 or more as quickly as possible, and we will pursue this objective aggressively. However, we will not sacrifice quality to meet end strength; the Army will continue to invest in young Americans and make the profession of arms a desired path for all.

## THE CURRENT RECRUITING ENVIRONMENT

America's military currently faces the most challenging recruiting environment since the All-Volunteer Force was established in 1973. These recruiting challenges are driven, in part, by a low national un-employment rate, a strong job market, intense competition with the private sector, and a declining number of young Americans interested in, and qualified for, uniformed service.

The percentage of young Americans meeting the Army standards to enlist has decreased markedly over the past four decades. Currently, only 23 percent of 17- to 24- year-old Americans are fully qualified to serve, with obesity, addiction, conduct, test scores, and medical and behavioral health the top disqualifiers for service.

Additionally, with fewer people available to join the Army and populations moving to the westward and less urban areas, the availability of potential recruits is declining and shifting to areas with less Army presence.

Underlying these specific challenges in the recruiting environment are broad "gaps" identified by market research as hindering young people from considering Army service. There is a knowledge gap that indicates the Army's story is not reaching enough Americans, most of whom have limited exposure to currently serving soldiers or veterans. As of 2020, the percentage of youth who have had a parent serve in the military dropped to only 14 percent. Further, only 36 percent of youth say they are familiar with Army service. There is an identity gap, where potential recruits cannot see themselves in the Army, often due to assumptions about Army life and culture. Finally, there is a trust gap that shows younger Americans are losing trust and confidence in many American institutions, including the military. Currently, trust in American institutions is at 45 percent, down from 70 percent in 2018.

Today, only 1 percent of our Nation serves in the military, and 83 percent of the young people who do join the Army have a family member who has served. This means that the people who do join the military are more likely to have been exposed to military life and know what it means to serve. It also indicates that the majority of Americans likely do not understand military service, do not recognize a call to serve, or have misperceptions about what military service entails. Right now, the military resembles a family business, with service a legacy passed through families. We need to help

Americans understand how the Army creates opportunities to contribute to something bigger than themselves. We need to make military service an option for all young Americans who want to serve and be a part of a profession that contributes to our Nation.

## INITIATIVES TO INCREASE ACCESSION OF QUALIFIED CANDIDATES

The Army is committed to filling its ranks with the quality soldiers we need for the Army of 2030. Accordingly, the Army has established a task force to conduct a comprehensive review and analysis of the Army's accessions enterprise, including policy, structure, manning, marketing, practices, and procedures, and make recommendations to address recruiting challenges, mitigate risk to the All-Volunteer Force, maintain quality, and position the accessions enterprise for success in the future.

All initiatives designed to increase the accession of qualified candidates will meet these principles: 1) We will not sacrifice quality for quantity. 2) We will not lower our standards. 3) We will invest in America's young people so they can meet our standards, because the Army is unparalleled in its ability to unlock an individual's full potential.

## THE FUTURE SOLDIER PREPARATORY COURSE

The Army is investing in prospective soldiers to help them overcome barriers to enlistment. The Future Soldier Preparatory Course (FSPC), currently being piloted at Fort Jackson, South Carolina, gives potential recruits the chance to work to meet the enlistment requirements. Through the FSPC, the Army is increasing opportunities to serve without sacrificing the quality needed across the force.

## INCENTIVIZING TALENT

Enlistment bonuses help shape behavior, both in terms of filling critical specialties as well as near term training seats. Incentivizing individuals to begin their Army career quickly, sometimes in as little as 30 days, is a critical tool used to get new recruits onboard. We are currently offering up to \$50,000 for critical skills and \$40,000 to report to basic training before the end of the fiscal year. As of August 25, 2022, 7,298 applicants accepted the critical skills incentive and 12,490 applicants accepted the "quick-ship" incentive. The Army has spent \$67 million on critical skills incentives and \$231 million on "quick-ship" incentives.

The current competitive labor market offers today's youth many options and we have found that when competing for talent with the private sector, as well as the other Services, enlistment bonuses are sometimes the deciding factor.

Aside from monetary incentives, the Army has also made policy changes designed to make service more appealing to prospective soldiers. For example, the Army is currently offering duty station choice, which means future soldiers can choose to select their first duty station after training. Highly desirable location options include Hawaii, Germany, Korea, Colorado, and Texas. As of August 26, 2022, more than 5,000 recruits have received their first choice of duty station in fiscal year 2022. Having a choice in where they serve can be a big motivator for some individuals. The intent of this non-monetary incentive is to give an applicant the ability to choose and build their own compensation package along with monetary incentives that will create an intrinsic motivation to serve.

The Army recently released an updated tattoo policy, in line with the other military services, that will enable more individuals to serve. This new policy eases tattoo restrictions on specific areas of the body, including the face, back of the neck, and hands, and will allow individuals who meet all other qualifications for appointment or enlistment the opportunity to serve.

## ARMY MARKETING

Attracting qualified talent and remaining competitive in the labor market is essential to our Army's future success, and our marketing campaigns are fundamental to this effort. We plan to continue implementation of the successful "Know your Army" and "What's Your Warrior" marketing campaigns while focusing efforts to improve the conversion of leads to appointments and appointments to contracts.

The Army is working to provide additional funding for national, regional, and local marketing in key priority population centers, including funding for recruiting events to engage with youth. We are also working to establish five regional marketing offices to better support regional and local recruiting efforts.

Army Enterprise Marketing Office (AEMO) continues to develop data informed, synchronized and relevant advertising and marketing plans to build awareness of Army opportunities and benefits in support of our accessions requirements. From these efforts, local commanders can pull weekly reports that provide an accurate assessment on the use of those funds to ensure they are meeting their requirements for marketing and, if not, use that data to modify their local plans. AEMO's implementation of talent-matching features like the Career Match Tool 2.0 and the im-

plementation of the GoArmy.com Contact Center, modernized how the Army presents, interacts, and attracts prospects, positioning the Army to compete for talent commensurate with leading employers using modern tools and talent acquisition approaches. Over the past year, U.S. Army Recruiting Command increased virtual recruiting capabilities and was the first service to pivot to a primarily virtual environment during the onset of the pandemic.

Our marketing efforts must be fully funded and focused on leading young Americans to understand the benefits and opportunities in the Army.

#### OPTIMIZING RECRUITERS

The skills of Army recruiters are fundamental to recruiting the best young men and women to serve in our Army. To ensure we have the most talented recruiters on the “front lines” of our recruiting efforts, we have extended the tours of duty of more than 420 of the Army’s best military recruiters across nationwide markets to help increase the number of potential recruits.

Our long-term efforts to ensure recruiting excellence include the following: 1) Identifying, assessing, and selecting the best battalion commanders for our recruiting battalions through established talent management initiatives. 2) Applying talent management principles to recruiter selection. 3) Better incentivizing and rewarding increased recruiter productivity.

The Army is using a program called the Noncommissioned Officer Special Assignment Battery (NSAB) to screen Non-Commissioned Officers (NCOs) for recruiter assignments. Results from a sample of 1,032 experienced Army recruiters indicated that soldiers with high NSAB composite scores reported lower job stress and higher satisfaction with recruiting duty. These high-scoring recruiters also were rated by their peers and supervisors as performing better than recruiters with lower NSAB composite scores. These findings indicate that the NSAB can help to identify soldiers with high potential for recruiting duty success, and it also has the potential for screening in other NCO assignments.

We will also continue to apply digital age technology to recruiting operations and review current recruiting facility practices and policies to ensure they enable a 21st century approach to recruiting.

#### OFFICER RECRUITING

The Army is on track to recruit and access more than 4,500 Active Component officers in fiscal year 2022, with more than 10,000 officers accessed across all components. All sources of commission are expected to meet their fiscal year 2022 accessions mission. Additionally, the Army is on track to access 1,745 warrant officers in both technical and aviation fields in fiscal year 2022. Army marketing launched the “Decide to Lead” officer focused marketing campaign in August 2022 to continue to drive the strongest candidates toward Army service as officers.

Ensuring the officer corps is representative of the Nation it serves is an essential component of our strategy. The U.S. Army Cadet Command’s Urban Access pilot program established Strategic Officer Recruiting Detachments (SORDs) in Los Angeles, California and Houston, Texas to increase access to Army Officer opportunities in these highly diverse markets. By partnering with U.S. Army Recruiting Command, local community leaders and educators, the SORD builds awareness and interest in the depth and breadth of Army service opportunities. The SORD refers qualified students to our Senior Reserve Officer Training Corps (ROTC) programs, and as of 3rd quarter fiscal year 2022, began offering ROTC scholarships to deserving candidates from these two markets. U.S. Army Cadet Command (Cadet Command) continues to leverage internship programs to assign highly successful first lieutenants back to select Senior ROTC programs. The Patton Internship program places combat arms officers at select Historically Black Colleges and Universities to mentor young cadets about the unique leadership opportunities available in the combat arms branches. Through the Cavazos Internship program, Cadet Command places Spanish-speaking First Lieutenants at select Hispanic Serving Institutions to engage students and their influencers about the value of the Senior ROTC program and service as an Army officer. We continue to see promise from these efforts.

Cadet Command increased the number of Cadet packets evaluated in the fiscal year 2022 branching board for Active Duty by nearly 500 files. These efforts resulted in an increase of 127 African American, Hispanic or Asian Pacific Islander Cadets selected for Active Duty, and 57 of the 127 were selected for combat arms.

#### CONCLUSION

The United States Army exists for one purpose, to protect the Nation by fighting and winning our Nation’s wars as a member of the Joint Force, and our readiness

depends on a quality All-Volunteer Force. We must harness our resources to call our fellow Americans to service in the defense of our Nation.

We are in a war for talent, and it will take all our people—soldiers across all components, families, Army civilians, and soldiers for life—to fight and win this war.

The Army is committed to working with this Committee, and with the assistance of Congress as a whole, to help maintain the United States Army as the greatest fighting force.

Senator GILLIBRAND. We are prepared to hear from Vice Admiral Cheeseman.

**STATEMENT OF VICE ADMIRAL RICK CHEESEMAN, DEPUTY CHIEF OF NAVAL OPERATIONS, PERSONNEL, MANPOWER AND TRAINING, N1 UNITED STATES NAVY**

Admiral CHEESEMAN. Thank you.

Chairwoman Gillibrand, Ranking Member Tillis, and distinguished members of the Personnel Subcommittee, thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today to discuss our Navy's most important strategic asset, our people.

Recruiting and retaining sailors is the Secretary of the Navy's top priority and he is personally involved in our Navy Working Group to address these challenges. Additionally, the recently released Chief of Naval Operations Navigation Plan for 2022 reaffirms his fundamental belief that people are our most important element. We cannot accomplish a single mission without them.

Strategic competition demands that we remain ahead of our adversaries, who persistently challenge our traditional warfighting dominance through new weapon systems and innovative tactics.

In response, our Navy forms an essential element of the Joint Force by building and sustaining warfighting capability. Our perennial advantage remains our people and our sailors relentlessly pursue operational excellence.

However, without a steady supply of new sailors this advantage could quickly wane. It is for this reason that we pulled every possible lever to achieve mission success in recruiting.

As fiscal year 2022 draws to a close, I can report that Navy has met 100 percent of our active component enlisted recruiting mission, which is the vast majority of our new total accessions.

However, while we continue to fight for every person, I expect that we will fall short of reserve enlisted mission as well as our active and reserve officer mission.

Our Navy team continues to focus on the factors that influence our recruiting efforts, assess the current situation to meet our recruiting goals, and implement initiatives to keep our force near end strength controls.

We continue to leverage our large-scale digital recruiting presence through our "Forged by the Sea" marketing and advertising campaign, which allows us to reach each and every zip code to access previously undiscovered talent.

In 2017, 34 percent of our marketing and advertising was digital. Today, we are at nearly 100 percent digital, resulting in a 30 percent increase in national leads while taking the message to where our future sailors are operating, online.

While we remain committed to aggressively fighting for the best our Nation has to offer, we are beginning to witness an increased competition for needed talent. In particular, we are experiencing

challenges due to labor market conditions, strong commercial competitors, and low propensity to serve among our 18-to 24-year-old target demographic.

The year 2022 has seen low unemployment with continued wage growth, resulting in strong labor demand in all markets nationwide. The Navy welcomes support to promote military service with as much enthusiasm and credibility as colleges, trade schools, or nontraditional gig economy careers. Legislation to support an increase to the enlistment bonus statutory maximums and specialists' skill pay and bonuses will help as well.

Building upon the gains of the last few years, Navy remains committed to retaining the right talent and experience in the right pay grades and ratings. This is a mutually supporting effort with recruiting and we have used every lever within our authority to maximize those making the decision to stay Navy.

Navy retention remains above our year to date retention forecasts in all zones, which are tracking to meet or exceed our fiscal year 2022 retention attainment benchmarks. That said, we remain cautiously optimistic for fiscal year 2023 while we closely monitor all of our retention metrics.

Our Navy is committed to attracting, developing, and inspiring America's finest so we can best protect and defend our American way of life. We cannot fully accomplish this without your continued support.

As Chief Naval Officer (CNO) frequently states, every day matters in this critical decade. Everything that you can do to prevent the negative impacts of a Continuing Resolution will help ensure our warfighting capability and the fulfillment of our commitment to our sailors and their families.

I remain inspired by our sailors. They exceed every expectation on watch today and every day around the globe. You and every American can be proud of the sailors and families of your United States Navy as they serve our great Nation.

Thank you, and I look forward to your questions.

[The prepared statement of Vice Admiral Richard J. Cheeseman follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT BY VICE ADMIRAL RICHARD J. CHEESEMAN JR.

INTRODUCTION

Chairwoman Gillibrand, Ranking Member Tillis, and distinguished Members of the Personnel Subcommittee, thank you for the opportunity to discuss the Navy's most important strategic asset—our people. To keep our force mission ready, your Navy has continued to focus on recruiting our Nation's very best talent in sufficient numbers while implementing innovative retention initiatives.

CURRENT STATUS OF MEETING NAVY RECRUITING GOALS

Navy continues to attack the fiscal year 2022 accession mission, but is experiencing challenges due to labor market conditions, strong competitors, and low market propensity to serve among the target demographic. To date, the Navy has shipped (or has contracted to ship) 92 percent of the fiscal year 2022 Active component (AC) mission to Recruit Training Command and remains on track to meet the fiscal year 2022 AC accessions mission (33,400/33,400—100 percent). For the Navy Reserve component (RC), affiliations are forecasted to fall short of the fiscal year 2022 mission by approximately 1,800 (5,600/7,400—76 percent).

For the AC officer mission, Navy anticipates achieving 89 percent of the AC officer mission (2,243 of 2,507) and 67 percent of the RC officer mission (908 of 1,360). The

market continues to be particularly challenging for RC Medical Department officer recruiting, with Navy attaining only 51 percent of the RC Medical Department mission.

#### FACTORS IMPACTING RECRUITING EFFORTS

The fiscal year 2022 recruiting environment is one of the toughest in recent history. According to a Department of Defense Youth Poll conducted in 2020 from the Office of the Secretary of Defense (OSD) Joint Advertising Market Research & Studies (JAMRS), the total population in our primary target demographic (17 to 21 years old) is 21.4 million. Of those, 13.6 million are considered high academic quality, meaning that they have A's or B's, with an estimated 50 or higher on the Armed Forces Qualification Test (AFQT). In that group, only 4.6 million are eligible which means that these individuals have no disqualifying medical or legal issue and finally, of those, 390 thousand have a propensity to serve (9 percent). In fact, aggregate military propensity is lower today than it has been since 2007. Another factor is the state of the current youth market where there is a lack of familiarity with the military. Youth now are questioning the value and relevancy of the military as an organization in comparison to the issues they are experiencing and discussing.

Using JAMRS data, we are seeing a fragmented and increasingly costly media market. Due to COVID-19, since March 2020, there was a significant decline in relationships and contacts recruiters could cultivate directly, diminishing their ability to penetrate local markets. The Navy has worked hard to leverage digital technology to employ the online sphere in addition to brick and mortar or shoe-leather recruiting.

According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics August 2022 Employment Situation news release, the unemployment rate is 3.7 percent, indicating a very competitive labor market. In August, there were 6.0 million unemployed persons for 11.2 million job openings with 4.2 million people quitting their jobs in July 2022. The resignation rate among employees remains among the highest on record since the Bureau of Labor Statistics Job Openings and Labor Turnover Survey began in December of 2000. The employment situation has led to increasingly competitive civilian hiring incentives (\$3,000 average); tuition assistance and high wages (\$15-\$25 per hour) across all industries.

#### INITIATIVES IN NAVY RECRUITING

At the end of 2021, the Chief of Naval Operations (CNO) put out a challenge to all commanding officers in the Navy to be honest in our assessment of our commands to reassess our effectiveness in a charge called "Get Real, Get Better (GRGB)." MyNavy HR has accepted the challenge by conducting GRGB deep dives on production and exploring how each Navy Talent Acquisition Group (NTAG) can better penetrate specific markets to improve recruiter performance.

Through these reviews, we discovered that Marketing and Advertising (M&A), E-Talent Teams and Virtual Recruiting, monetary incentives, expanding policy to increase the applicant pool, along with improving training and standardization are effective tools. M&A concentrates on efforts to provide real, authentic stories from actual sailors addressing the barriers, concerns, and key motivators to joining. We also realized that this method has an immediate impact on recruiting efforts by generating interest and online activity via digital advertisements. E-Talent Teams and Virtual Recruiting are used by online recruiting experts to engage the market virtually and generate leads on platforms where the youth market is spending their time. Currently, we use *Handshake*, *LinkedIn*, and *Indeed* which are tools that allow recruiters to continue engaging high quality applicants that are actively seeking employment virtually while *eToolbox* is a website that allows the easy distribution of recruiting aids such as digital brochures and school presentations.

The Navy's monetary incentives enabled us to influence placement of shippers and remain in contention with other services and the civilian market. Here are the current bonuses offered to candidates:

- \$50,000 Enlistment Bonus Ceiling—Expanded opportunities for future sailors to reach or get close to ceiling.
- Offering \$5,000/\$12,000/\$15,000 for AC Future Sailors that ship between 1 July and 30 September.
- \$25,000 for all Training and Administration of Reserve (TAR) and \$5 to \$15,000 for select New Accession Training (NAT) Future Sailors that ship by October.

In order to increase the applicant pool, MyNavy HR has expanded waivers for AFQT scores, single parents, past positive drug/alcohol tests (PosDATs), tattoos, and age. At the end of March 2022, Navy extended the AFQT waiver pilot that allows Navy Recruiting Command (NRC) to consider waivers for applicants with 26 to 30

AFQT scores. In addition, the requirement for 70 percent of accessions to have an AFQT greater than or equal to 50 was aligned to the Department of Defense (DOD) standard of 60 percent. SECNAV also signed the delegation of authority on this same date for a pilot program waiving dependency status for AC enlistment of unmarried individuals with custody of dependents under the age of 18. The program requires that applicants have no more than two dependents under 18 and no dependents 12 months or younger.

While 100 percent virtual recruiting was the focus of many recruiters during the height of COVID-19, face-to-face engagement is essential for Navy Recruiting to infiltrate the local markets. MyNavy HR provided each NTAG with a Mobile Engagement Vehicle (MEV) consisting of a large van and necessary equipment (tables, tents, banners) to support a mobile physical recruiting presence in any outdoor space (e.g. mall parking lot, fair, or career day). In an effort to get after Reserve recruiting, Navy Recruiting Reserve Command (NRRC) was established under NRC to consolidate the Naval Veteran (NAVET) and Reserve Direct Commission missions. Results have shown positive gains in the reserve mission.

The Navy started the Naval Reserve Officers Training Corps (NROTC) Blue and Gold Officers (NBGO) program similar to the United States Naval Academy (USNA) Blue and Gold program to provide a cadre of trained volunteers to identify, recruit, counsel, and assist applicants during the NROTC scholarship application process. NBGOs serve as mentors and subject matter experts on NROTC scholarship application submission and help ensure timely application completion. We also established a Junior Officer Diversity Officers (JODO) program that partners with Unrestricted Line Officers to share their Navy experiences with high school and college students within diverse communities throughout the country.

“Every Sailor is a Recruiter” (ESaR) is an Navy initiative to leverage Active and Reserve sailors in helping select, mentor, and prepare the next generation of sailors to man the fleet. There are programs already in place such as Hometown Area Recruiting Program (HARP), Officer HARP (OHARP), and Senior Minority Assistance to Recruiting Program (SEMINAR) that send sailors back to their hometowns to help recruiting efforts in those areas. ESaR takes it a step further by asking every sailor to share their stories within their circles of influence. Another new recruiting initiative is Navy 3 to 1 to 3, every new sailor is asked to provide three potential Centers of Influence (COI), one social media handle, and three referrals. Initial indications have shown a good potential to generate activity.

#### RETENTION

Navy is on track to meet all fiscal year 2022 enlisted retention goals. This has been accomplished through a combination of special and incentive pays while expanding the scope of non-monetary incentives. Officer retention to Department Head is a key metric to ensure adequate numbers enter the control grades of 0 to 4 and above, but is behind plan in most of our Unrestricted Line communities. Many of our officer special and incentive pays are at legislative limits making them less effective than in the past.

##### Sharpened Focus on Enlisted Monetary Incentives:

- Selective Reenlistment Bonus (SRB)—In fiscal year 2022, more than 55,000 new sailors became eligible for SRB. The program updated over 100 new skillsets and increases to the award levels. Navy has seen over 8,800 approved sailors reenlist with an additional 1,500 pending under the SRB program in fiscal year 2022 with the most recent update released on 9 August.
- Assignment Incentive Pay (AIP)—provides monetary incentives so sailors may volunteer for assignments that are deemed exceptionally difficult to fill. This mostly addresses critical shore assignments. The list of eligible duty assignments were extended in fiscal year 2022 and more changes are expected to address manning shortfalls in fiscal year 2023.
- Sea Duty Incentive Pay (SDIP)—Provide monetary incentives to get sailors to extend their duty assignments in select sea duty billets. It also provides opportunities for sailors to shorten shore assignments in order to return to sea duty sooner. Eligibility is reviewed quarterly. Skillsets that have reached adequate manning levels are removed from the eligibility chart, while more challenged skillsets remain or are added.
- Detailing Marketplace Incentive Pay (DMIP)—This is a relatively new program that seeks to address sea duty manning challenges for sea-intensive ratings in the journeyman pay band. DMIP can be received in addition to other special pays except for AIP and SDIP.

Targeting Non-Monetary Incentives for Officers:

- Communities continue to offer significant bonuses to retain talent through department head milestone tours, but impact is maximized through pairing with non-monetary incentives.
- Officer engagement enhanced via round tables, surveys, and symposia with community leaders. Survey feedback has put a spotlight on quality of life and career path flexibility which are being aggressively addressed.
- Early engagement from detailers is improving the balance of personal needs with needs of the Navy by increasing offerings of geographic stability (back-to-back tours), highlighting alternative career paths, and better communicating fellowship and education program opportunities.

#### FORCE MANAGEMENT LEVERS FOR ENLISTED PERSONNEL

- Enlisted Early Out Programs—Curtailing all early out program opportunities and new time in grade waivers, while offering enlistment contract extension opportunities for sailors who are voluntarily separating or retiring. Commanding Officers still retain the 90-day early out authority for education and some officer programs.
- High Year Tenure Waivers (HYT)—Navy continues to offer HYT waivers for sailors wanting to go to sea, stay at sea or who possess critical skills required to maintain mission readiness.
- Reenlistment Opportunity—Every retention eligible sailor is provided a reenlistment quota via Career Waypoints (C-WAY) reenlistment or from their Commanding Officer.
- Advance to Position (A2P)—As part of the detailing marketplace, qualified sailors will be able to apply to billets in a higher paygrade, with agreement to additional service obligation. They advanced to the new pay grade upon reporting to the new position.
- Command Advanced to Position (CA2P)—allows commands to fill projected vacancies with on board E4 personnel. If qualified for the position, sailors being awarded a CA2P opportunity are realigned to the Journeyman billet, obligate to complete a 3-year tour receiving DMIP, and advanced to E-5.
- Offering Rating Conversion Opportunities—In an effort to provide well-balanced enlisted ratings and to retain talented and experienced sailors.
- Indefinite Recall (Reserve component to Active component (RC2AC))—Seeks to place qualified enlisted reserve members in specific rates and year groups to fill active community needs in the fleet. Fiscal year 2022 target is 225. Looking to increase the target to 325 for fiscal year 2023.
- Senior Enlisted Continuation Board (SECB)—Delayed holding fiscal year 2023 board. Will re-evaluate to hold in fiscal year 2024. SECB is part of continued effort to optimize the quality of the force while shaping Navy end strength to meet future challenges.
- Special and Incentive Pays—The Navy’s extensive special and incentive pay programs offer dozens of pays to eligible sailors across various enlisted rates and officer designators. In fiscal year 2022, significant improvements were made to SRB and AIP programs in addition to the introduction of DMIP.

#### FORCE MANAGEMENT LEVERS FOR OFFICERS

- Promotion Merit Reorder—Allows placing up to 15 percent of those selected for promotion (O-4/O-5/O-6 Line and Staff Boards) to the top of the list, demonstrating the value and primacy of merit over simple time in service.
- Expanded continuation authority (“Up & Stay”)—Permits certain control grade officers serving in targeted skills to remain on Active Duty beyond the traditional statutory 30-year Active Duty limit.
- Promotion board consideration deferment (“Opt-out”)—Enables retention of top talent by allowing an officer to submit a request to opt-out of promotion consideration due to completion of a career broadening assignment, advanced education, or a career progression requirement.
- Expanded officer spot promotion authority—Facilitates filling at-sea and operational 0 to 5 and 0 to 6 billets with officers possessing critical skills (post-operational or operational command executive leadership).
- Career Intermission Program (CIP)—Allows officers and enlisted sailors the ability to transfer out of the active component and into the individual ready reserve for up to three years while retaining full health care coverage and base access privileges. Main reasons for CIP participation include education and family support.

## CONCLUSION

Attracting and retaining individuals who want to serve the Nation is a priority for our leadership since it is key to maintaining our advantage at sea and winning long-term strategic competition. The Navy continuously monitors the economic conditions and reassesses the important role these factors play in understanding how to effectively manage talent. The Navy leverages competitive pay and benefits packages, talent management initiatives, and steadily modernized HR service delivery in order to combat an increasingly challenging labor market. On behalf of the men and women of the United States Navy and their families, thank you for your sustained commitment and unwavering support.

Senator GILLIBRAND. Thank you, Vice Admiral.

Lieutenant General Miller, we are prepared to hear your opening statement.

**STATEMENT OF LIEUTENANT GENERAL CAROLINE MILLER,  
DEPUTY CHIEF OF STAFF FOR MANPOWER, PERSONNEL,  
AND SERVICES, UNITED STATES AIR FORCE**

Lieutenant General MILLER. Chairwoman Gillibrand, Ranking Member Tillis, and distinguished members of the committee, thank you for the opportunity to appear before you to discuss the recruiting efforts of the Department of the Air Force.

I am honored to be able to highlight the things we are doing to showcase the Air Force as the employer of choice. As we near the end of the fiscal year, I can report to you that the Active Duty Air Force has met its recruiting goal for fiscal year 2022 by a narrow margin but with a minimal bank of ready recruits for fiscal year 2023.

The Air Reserve components, however, will fall short of their recruiting goals. The Department of the Air Force is actively aware that there is an intense competition for talent driven by an ongoing national labor shortage. We anticipate the recruiting environment to be even more challenging in 2023 and beyond.

One major concern is that the current youth market is increasingly disconnected and unfamiliar with the military, resulting in fewer youths interested in or planning to join. Today, only one of 11 eligible individuals in the 17-to 24-year-old range has a propensity to serve.

Furthermore, overall, public perception of the military is often inaccurate with negative publicity overshadowing the tangible benefits and positive global impact airmen make every day.

To combat these challenges and increase our recruiting pool, the Air Force is engaging with several angles. We are improving our recruiter training program. We are increasing monetary incentives for recruits.

We are intensifying our recruiting efforts to target diverse populations and improving our marketing campaigns to include initiatives to use general officers to expand the arm's reach of our recruiters.

Hampered by restrictions from worldwide COVID-19 pandemic, our recruiters have been unable to access schools or conduct other public engagements. This lack of access atrophied the required skills and greatly diminished the routine contacts recruiters need to successfully communicate and promote the Air Force brand.

Currently, 70 percent of Active Duty recruiters have never recruited in a non-COVID environment. To rehone their skills we

have implemented an aggressive training plan for recruiters to address training deficits and increase community presence.

In fiscal year 2022, we increased enlistment incentive bonuses by approximately \$22 million. This resulted in over 2,200 new recruits contracted between April and September 2022.

Additionally, we implemented a quick ship bonus, allowing us to successfully contract 320 enlistees and immediately send them to basic training, ensuring we filled every available seat. We intend to continue this in fiscal year 2023.

Furthermore, we are actively examining all accession policies to determine if there are any areas in which we can adjust to eliminate unnecessary barriers to serve. Our drive program provides motivated but medically disqualified airmen a chance to serve their country in ways other than in uniform.

The program is designed to transform medically disqualified airmen with unique skill sets into viable civil service applicants, thereby keeping the talent within the Air Force.

This summer, the Secretary of the Air Force established new goals for officers' source of commissioning applicant pools. We have been—we have expanded diversity recruiting efforts with additional recruiters and ongoing improvements to total force marketing with a specific focus on underrepresented female, Hispanic, Asian/Pacific Islander, and American Indian/Native Alaskan populations. We have increased our recruiter presence to various academic institutions in untapped geographic regions.

The Department is also focusing efforts on K through 12 youth with our Inspire Operations and aviation inspiration mentorship programs. These programs are designed to encourage young students in underrepresented groups to pursue STEM in aviation careers.

This challenging recruiting environment is likely to continue for the foreseeable future. Our ability to remain competitive as an employer of choice relies on increasing the reach of our recruiting efforts to expand the recruiting pool, and from the bottom of my heart I can tell you that we continue to have an unbeatable value proposition where we offer opportunity, community, and purpose to these willing Americans.

Not only do we offer an opportunity to come serve alongside some of the greatest Americans they will ever meet in the Air Force and Space Force, but we offer an opportunity to change the trajectory of lives, make better citizens, and to leave people with an undeniable sense that they have made a difference, that they have made it matter.

I appreciate your continued support of the Department of Defense. Thank you, and I look forward to your questions.

[The prepared statement of Lieutenant General Caroline M. Miller follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT BY LIEUTENANT GENERAL CAROLINE M. MILLER

#### INTRODUCTION

Chairwoman Gillibrand, Ranking Member Tillis, Distinguished Members of this Committee, thank you for your continued support and for the opportunity to appear before you today. America's airmen remain steadfast in providing Global Vigilance, Reach, and Power to protect and defend our Nation.

As the Secretary of the Air Force has articulated, our national security challenges are growing at a rapid pace. It is clear our Air Force must modernize and improve our operational posture to successfully meet those challenges or face losing. We are fully focused on this imperative and recognize our airmen and their families form the essential foundation for our ability to meet those future challenges anytime, anywhere.

#### THE FORCE WE NEED

A major constraint in today's world is rapid change. We must focus on maintaining readiness today while building the Air Force we need for tomorrow's high-end fight. To recruit, develop, employ, engage and retain the airmen we need, we require agile and responsive talent management and force development processes ensuring each Airman is valued, is appropriately trained, and empowered to reach their full potential. Only skilled, confident, and properly supported airmen can transform a weapons system into an Air Force capability to win the future fight.

The Department of the Air Force is taking an enterprise approach to recruiting our Nation's best, creating unity of effort and synergy across the Total Force to improve talent acquisition and operational effectiveness. The Air Force combined all six recruiting networks (our Active Duty, Air National Guard (ANG), Air Force Reserve (AFR), Civilian Service, AFROTC, and USAFA) to the greatest extent practical to foster unified strategies to recruit the next generation of airmen and guardians in our Nation's increasingly challenging recruiting environment and to maintain the world's best Air Force and Space Force.

For the Total Force, it means better buying power, bigger networks, and better recruiting coverage; for the recruiter, it means leveraging off one another's strengths; and one medical accessions division bringing smart, consistent decisions while using comprehensive data to measure and adjust medical accession standards as we move forward. Most importantly, for the American public, it means uniformity in our message: America's Air Force—serve full or part-time, in or out of uniform as an officer, enlisted, or civilian.

#### *Recruiting Goals*

Based on the current projections, the USAF will meet Active Duty recruiting goals for fiscal year 2022 by a narrow margin with a minimal bank of ready recruits for 2023. The ANG and AFR are expected to miss 2022 recruiting goals by approximately 2,400 and 1,400 respectively.

The Department of the Air Force is acutely aware of the competition for talent, driven by an ongoing national labor shortage and expects the recruiting environment to be even more challenging in 2023 and beyond. More concerning, the youth market is increasingly disconnected and unfamiliar with today's military, resulting in fewer youth interested in or planning to join the military. Today only 23 percent of 17- to 24-year-old men and women in the United States are eligible to serve in the military without a waiver and only one in 11 have a propensity to serve.

Initially, the necessary deployment of MHS Genesis across the DOD recruiting enterprise resulted in slower processing times and increased applicant loss rate and placed further pressure on an already difficult recruiting mission.

Given these challenges, the Air Force is actively engaged in improving how we recruit tomorrow's airmen. We are pulling all available levers: improving recruiter training, growing enlistment incentives, increasing public affairs and marketing campaigns, expanding diversity and inclusion efforts, as well as making quality of life and service enhancements.

An assessment of recruiting squadron procedures and environmental challenges determined that the aggregate effects of 2 years of COVID with limited or no access to schools and lack of public engagement atrophied the required skills and routine contacts recruiters need to successfully communicate and sell the Air Force as a career. Currently 70 percent of Active Duty recruiters have never recruited in a non-COVID environment. Toward the beginning of 2022, the Air Force implemented an aggressive training plan and recruiter incentive program to address training deficits and increase community presence.

Additionally, the Air Force increased Enlistment Incentive Bonuses by approximately \$22 million toward hard-to-fill Air Force Specialty Codes. This proved effective and resulted in over 2,200 new recruits contracted in the last half of fiscal year 2022.

Additionally, the Air Force relaxed restrictions on small hand tattoos historically disqualifying thousands of otherwise well-qualified applicants. The Air Force is partnering with DOD to explore less restrictive medical accession standards that minimize operational risk while maintaining high quality accessions. Furthermore, we are reviewing other accessions standards to include tattoo, driver's license, post-

partum, and drug-and-alcohol test policies which could serve to eliminate barriers to serve.

The Air Force has established a Regional Marketing Organization to address localized challenges and standardize our marketing approach across all components. Additionally, the Air Force has implemented a market segmentation approach at zip code levels to recruit from growth and untapped potential to support greater diversity.

To enhance diversity, we focused on increasing our female applicant pool within officer accession sources, setting an initial target to achieve growth in female applicants to 30 percent. We surpassed that goal at the USAFA for the class of 2025, and 32.5 percent of the entering class were women. Last year's graduating class was 29.4 percent female, a 0.4 percent increase from 2020. Within our ROTC program, we raised our fiscal year 2024 applicant pool to 30 percent female, with 25.2 percent female representation in the most recent commissioning class (FY21), a 3 percent increase since fiscal year 2016. From an applicant pool perspective, Officer Training School (OTS) has increased its diversity applications between fiscal year 2020 and fiscal year 2022 by 2.5 percent for female, 1.7 percent for Asian, .5 percent for Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander, 1.1 percent American Indian/Alaskan Native, 6.2 percent Hispanic, and unchanged at 9.9 percent for African American.

The Secretary of the Air Force established new Officer Source of Commissioning Applicant Pool Goals in August of this year. These goals included raising female applicants to 36 percent, Black/African American to 13 percent, Asian to 10 percent, American Indian/Native Alaskan to 1.5 percent Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander to 1 percent and Hispanic/Latino to 15 percent.

We have expanded diversity recruiting efforts with additional recruiters and ongoing Total Force marketing improvements focused on underrepresented female, Hispanic, Asian/Pacific Islander, and American Indian/Native Alaskan populations as well as academic institutions and untapped geographic regions. We are also marketing to Minority Serving Institutions and affinity-based professional organizations. Our General Officers are heavily engaged in recruiting efforts, supporting community and event engagement through the 'GO Inspire' initiative and partnerships with industry and external organizations to reach diverse STEM-minded personnel.

The Air Force is also focusing our efforts on K-12 youth programs with the intent to inspire youth in underrepresented groups to pursue STEM and aviation careers. We continue to expand "Inspire Operations", a STEM-based, aviation-focused, motivation and mentorship program designed to increase diversity and mitigate the pilot shortage across rated career fields to include Combat System Officers, Air Battle Managers and Remotely Piloted Aircraft pilots. The program pairs high school students and strategic partners nationwide involved in youth aviation and STEM with pathways to aviation via accession sources such as USAFA and Air Force ROTC, OTS, and Civilian Service. Program events encompass a wide range of engagements from strategic partnerships with national level aviation and youth organizations to supporting base level and local community youth outreach. These events incorporate the Aviation Inspiration Mentorship program, which is comprised of total force Rated Officers, who are Ambassadors serving as role models, mentors and Air Force representatives in highly engaging environments.

In 2022, Air Force Recruiting Service has completed 192 events, to date, with a 102 percent growth. Additionally, future events planning has increased by 202 percent over last year. Through deliberate strategic messaging of this program, we've increased our reach to a population of 24 million.

Additionally, the Air Force is leveraging predictive tests to ensure applicants are compatible to serve. The assessments include the risk of disciplinary and counterproductive workplace behaviors that might negatively impact well-being, morale, and mission effectiveness. We administer the Tailored Adaptive Personality Assessment System to all recruits which identifies and measures an applicant's suitability and adjustment potential for life in the military. This assessment also provides data for ongoing research and development to improve its utility.

As we increase our diverse pool of applicants, it's imperative the Air Force has a talent management system which positions airmen to succeed. This also serves to improve diversity in under-represented career fields. In 2022, the Air Force increased focus on the Air Force Work Interest Navigator (AF-WIN) Survey tool, designed to match enlisted recruits with Air Force career fields based on individual interests. AF-WIN is a web-based tool that presents a series of questions to recruits on functional communities, job contexts, and work activities. It uses an algorithm to create a customized career fit report on more than 135 enlisted Air Force careers, tailored to the recruit's interests. Recruiters use the survey results with their recruits to enhance job counseling and provide comprehensive information on specific

career paths and improve job satisfaction and retention efforts. Additionally, we expanded our job matching window, providing opportunities up to 5 months in the future (previously, job availability included only 60–90 days.) This increases the opportunity of recruits matched to the right career field and position.

Additionally, the Air Force Personnel Center's Develop, Redistribute, Improve, Vault Expose (DRIVE) Program provides a pathway for medically disqualified Active Duty, Guard, and Reserve Accession Program candidates, i.e., those attending BMT, Tech School, USAFA, College AFROTCs, etc., to enter the Department of the Air Force's Civil Service.

DRIVE candidates are used to fill civilian positions historically difficult to fill, creating a win/win situation for the trainee and the Department. Currently, 20 candidates were placed and another 15 are working through the civil service hiring process.

The Air Force continues to make strides transforming a portfolio of outdated systems that consume our airmen's time, energy, and flexibility when handling their Human Resource business affairs. We have moved into cutting edge, cloud-based technology which improves user experience, enhances data protection, and opens opportunities for mobile access. We continue to advocate for resourcing to modernize our recruiting platforms as a key part of this transformation. Thank you for your continued support of our Digital Transformation efforts.

#### *Retention*

Recruiting remains a top priority for the Air Force and equally as critical is the importance of retention of our agile and ready force. High retention is an indicator of the value our airmen place on serving. It ensures we maintain the experience required to face tomorrow's challenges. While the Department of the Air Force is no longer experiencing the unprecedented high retention we saw in 2021, overall retention remains high, with some areas continuing to experience retention challenges.

To alleviate retention challenges, the Department of the Air Force offers targeted monetary and non-monetary incentives. Specifically, we leveraged a \$197 million Selective Retention Bonus program in fiscal year 2022 which targets critical capabilities in the enlisted Air Force and Space Force Specialty Codes. The specialty codes targeted are those with low manning percentages, low retention, and/or high training costs. Some examples include special warfare, aircraft maintenance, cyber, and intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance. Non-monetary incentives include programs such as, but not limited to declination of Professional Military Education without retribution; spouse re-imbursement and re-licensure/certification requirements due to Permanent Change of Station (PCS); Pregnancy, Childbirth, and Caregiver Separation provisions; and the Career Intermission Program, which allows members a one-time, temporary transition from Active Duty to the Individual Ready Reserve to meet personal or professional needs.

The Aviation Bonus (AvB) is a strategic talent-management tool, tailored annually through our Business Case Model, specifically designed to retain the proper number of experienced aviators to improve readiness and maintain lethality of the force. The AvB program is a very cost-effective means of talent management compared to the costs and time required to replace very experienced aviators. The fiscal year 2022 AvB Business Case Model factored manning levels (current and forecast), retention tendencies (current and trend), cost and time to replace experienced aviator. Additionally, the model considers career field health stressors such as aggressive airline hiring movements, economic recovery, projected Field Grade Officer (FGO) shortages in fiscal year 2025, aircraft onboardin and divestitures, major aircraft upgrades, Company Grade Officer and FGO manning imbalances, and absorption challenges brought on by increased pilot product to determine program construct. The analysis identified all manned piloted platforms as top priorities for retention incentives, followed closely by Remotely Piloted Aircraft pilots, Air Battle Managers and Combat System Officers. With a budget of \$200.6 million, the fiscal year 2022 AvB offers both short-term (defined as 3 years minimum) and long-term (defined as 5 years or more) contract options and incentivizes long-term contracts with increased annual amounts and larger lump sum payments in the longer-term contract categories.

The Department continues to modify these annual programs to shape the rated force while practicing fiscal responsibility decisively and deliberately. Data garnered from the Rated Pilot Demonstration will surely assist in our ability to articulate future requirements while ensuring we remain fiscally responsible and deliberate in our offerings.

## MANAGING TALENT

The Air Force's Talent Management system continues to transform to fully support the National Defense Strategy. Its focus is to develop inclusive leaders with a competency skillset and character to produce the talent we need for the future high-end fight. Most Air Force talent management initiatives are directed toward a system empowering all airmen (military and civilian) to reach their full potential within a framework that increases agility, improves responsiveness, empowers performance, and provides transparency and simplicity. This framework is centered on defining and knowing our values, measuring key items, and incentivizing and rewarding individuals who demonstrate and excel at the valued qualities.

*Air Force Talent Management*

The Air Force is actively re-examining how we develop airmen over the continuum of their careers. Our goal is to align development to our stated values and Airman Leadership Qualities for formal and informal leaders. The emphasis on development and alignment to our values will result in new officer selection processes for the Air Force, ensuring our leaders have the highest levels of character and competence. Additionally, this will identify behaviors which require development prior to key leadership positions and command.

Furthermore, the Air Force continuously improves our capacity to find, support, and develop the innovation and Cyber workforce which supports the warfighter. We encourage and support innovative, best practices. We are currently creating developmental pathways for airmen (military and civilian) with innovative skills within their current communities and within functional communities. Innovators, partnering with experts in leading technology, are critical to building multi-capable airmen. The Department of the Air Force is exploring efficient ways to identify individuals with critical operational talent, including cyber, weather, special warfare operators and STEM arenas. Leaders at all levels, must support and enhance innovators, provide opportunities, and assist with roles.

*Diversity & Inclusion*

Diversity and Inclusion are force multipliers and warfighting imperatives. It is our duty to the American people to recruit and develop the finest quality warfighters available. Make no mistake, as we seek to attract the best from all parts of America, we will select the most capable our Nation has to offer. Recruiting and retaining talent key talent is dependent on being an inclusive organization.

To improve diversity, the Department of the Air Force created several barrier analysis working groups to identify barriers to retention of women and diverse Air and Space professionals. We made several significant policy adjustments based on their findings.

Since 2018, we have accessed and made accommodations for 31 practicing Sikh, Muslim, Heathen, Jewish, Norse, Eastern, and Russian Orthodox individuals. This allows these talented members to serve while still respecting their religious dress and appearance requirements. These professionals serve as role models for other talented Americans who can recognize themselves as a member of the Department of the Air Force.

In 2020, we adjusted policy for new mothers. They can now defer determining whether to separate from the service up to 12 months post-delivery. This provides ample time to determine whether military service is compatible with their growing family. We are currently expanding this policy to include all families, impacting approximately 3,500 airmen per month. Additionally, the Department of the Air Force directed units to provide nursing mothers access to lactation facilities.

We also updated hair grooming standards in February 2021, allowing women to wear one or two braids, or a single ponytail. Additionally, women can wear longer bangs that touch their eyebrow so long as the bangs do not cover their eyes. Shortly after implementation, the policy team received feedback from members in which the established policy still resulted in damaged hair. A second modification provided allowances for those hair types to ensure inclusivity.

Furthermore, we adjusted dress and appearance policies to allow accent marks and hyphens on name tapes and tags. We modified male grooming standards to include 5-year shaving waivers for qualifying airmen and adjusted increased length of mustaches.

More recently, the Department has revised aircrew pregnancy standards policy, allowing equitable opportunities across the force while normalizing pregnancy within the flying community. These changes are all part of our on-going efforts to create a more inclusive culture.

Upon DOD's implementation of the fiscal year 2022 NDAA's parental leave legislation, the Department of the Air Force will release complementing guidance au-

thorizing both birth and non-birth servicemembers 12 weeks of non-chargeable leave following the birth, adoption of a child of the member or placement of a minor child with the member for adoption or long-term foster care.

The Department of the Air Force's Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Accessibility (DEIA) Strategy focuses on four key areas to further diversity and inclusion efforts. First, we are working to align diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility to the Department's operational missions. Second, we are focused on leadership engagement and accountability with quantifiable results. Third, the Department is championing a culture of inclusion by establishing education and training throughout personnel lifecycles. Finally, we are institutionalizing DEIA principles through best practices, analysis, and feedback into policy.

#### HELPING AIRMEN AND FAMILIES REACH THEIR FULL POTENTIAL

Our airmen, guardians and families are our greatest competitive advantage. We recruit individuals but we retain families. Over the past year, the Department of the Air Force continued to focus on providing the absolute best care for our airmen, guardians, and their families. We are taking steps necessary to create an inclusive environment at which every airman and guardian can reach their full potential. In discussing our support and family related programs, the Air Force provides support to both airmen and guardians.

#### *Resiliency*

The Department of the Air Force has a robust Resiliency Program, with 32 agencies providing services to help our members and families thrive in their personal and professional lives. Resources are available to help with physical, mental, social, and spiritual needs. Our resources include, but are not limited to the Chaplain Corps, Mental Health, Military & Family Readiness Centers, Employee Assistance Program, Deployment Transition Center, Sexual Assault Response Coordinators, the Family Advocacy Program, and Morale, Welfare and Recreation Programs. The Department of the Air Force is committed to forming solid partnerships with supporting organizations based on individual installation needs and expanding support options to bolster all pillars of resilience for our airmen, guardians, and their families.

The Department has many agencies providing resiliency services. These agencies can be disconnected, resulting in the servicemembers and their families' challenges to navigate appropriately to ensure they receive the care required based on recommendations from the Independent Review Commission (IRC), we brought together the 32 agencies to develop a strategy which is client centered, supportive and reduces revictimization. The "Connect to Care" approach ensures individuals seeking care, services, or assistance are referred to the appropriate service, through an in-person referral by knowledgeable providers. These providers are well-educated on all resiliency services. In support of the Connect to Care approach, we built a toolkit that consists of training and resources for leaders at all levels, command teams, and service providers (medical and non-medical) to standardize the referral process, enhancing the capability to provide immediate and timely care.

Our airmen, guardians, and family members must be provided with the tools and techniques to help them adapt to changing conditions and prepare for, withstand, and rapidly recover from stress, disruption, or adversity. The Department of the Air Force Integrated Resilience approach is helping to educate all on the integrated support system of care across the Department. The care system addresses well-being, quality of life, diversity and inclusion actions, resilience activities, personal and professional development, and clinical and non-clinical intervention and response. Through the Department of the Air Force Community Action Team and Senior Leader engagements, we address four key themes: connections matter; there is no wrong door; placement and access builds trust; and accountability, innovation, flexibility, and continuous evaluation. The Department is aware of the link between sexual assault, sexual harassment, and retention risk. Investing in implementation of IRC recommendations will serve to support safe, inclusive and respectful climates, ultimately helping to retain airmen and guardians. Furthermore, we continue to aggressively pursue effective and innovative solutions to ensure an environment in which airmen, guardians, and family members can reach their full potential.

#### *Family Care*

The Department of the Air Force recognizes military service impacts the entire family. As such, we are committed to designing solutions that take care of our military families, to include military spouse support, child and youth program capacity, and family stability.

### *Spouse Employment*

Spouse employment is a critical element impacting family resilience, financial readiness, quality of life, retention, and mission success. Department of the Air Force spouse unemployment remains unchanged over the last decade at 19 percent in 2021. PCS moves may negatively impact a military spouse's ability to achieve their own career goals and aspirations, often leading to reduced employment opportunities or underemployment. The DOD and Department of the Air Force spouse employment programs provide a robust system of support to help military spouses find meaningful employment and connect with available resources. We continue to assess and engage with states advocating for improved professional license portability or pursuing interstate compacts. Additionally, the Department reimburses up to \$1000 for re-licensing/re-certification costs resulting from a PCS move for spouses of military members. Although the Department of the Air Force remains focused on licensure reimbursement as a critical benefit for military families, its usage is decreasing as the number of states that are waiving fees, entering interstate compacts, or providing universal recognition from other jurisdictions grows and eliminates the need for reimbursement.

Additionally, the Department of the Air Force utilizes several approaches to recruit and appoint military spouses. The non-competitive military spouse appointment authority has provided the DAF with the ability to hire 956 military spouses to appropriated fund positions and 469 military spouses to nonappropriated positions in fiscal year 2021. Many more spouses were hired and employed into local non-appropriated funded positions. This authority is one of the authorities by which a military spouse could be employed. Additionally, the DOD Military Spouse Preference program provides Federal employment hiring preference for spouses relocating due to a military member's PCS move. Spouses exercise their preference by applying for job vacancy announcements of their choosing. Best qualified spouses may be appointed to a DOD position over non-military spouse candidates. Employment may be permanent, temporary or term limited.

Air Force Child and Youth Programs (CYP) has developed a voluntary Employee Transfer Assistance Program (ETAP) for all Air Force nonappropriated fund (NAF) CY-I and CY-II series positions. This program allows all eligible NAF employees to request a non-competitive transfer to another Air or Space Force installation outside of the employee's commuting range of the current duty station. The employee will transfer without a break in service and into a position at the same grade and series from which they left. The Air Force Child and Youth Program NAF ETAP does not extend reciprocity to other DOD Child and Youth Programs.

### *Child Care*

Available, affordable, quality childcare programs support families and enable our members to focus on the mission. The Department of the Air Force is making every effort to provide childcare to those to need it. In fiscal year 2021, the Department provided childcare for over 47,870 children at installation child development programs. However, at some installations, the local demand for this type of care exceeds program capacity making alternative sources of care critical. Our network of Family Child Care homes offer additional care solutions and community-based fee assistance helps support families on a wait list for on-base care or not living near an installation. Currently, 4346 children are enrolled in the Military Child Care in Your Neighborhood program with \$17 million in fee assistance.

DAF parents are also actively participating in the new DOD In-Home Child Care Pilot (per Section 589 of William M. Thornberry National Defense Authorization Act for fiscal year 2021) at five high-cost areas: Hawaii; the National Capitol Region; Norfolk, VA; San Antonio, TX; and San Diego, CA. This program grants fee assistance to military families for full-time, in-home childcare providers, such as nannies, and as of July 2022, seven Department of the Air Force families are receiving assistance.

The nation-wide childcare worker staffing shortage is driving the Department of the Air Force to aggressively pursue recruitment and retention incentives. To increase childcare options and spaces, we developed targeted recruitment and retention incentives for Family Child Care providers used at 68 installations. Although the pandemic environment challenged our ability to increase the number of Family Child Care homes, we have been able to retain an average of 300 homes to support hourly and full-time care, 24/7 childcare, and other specialized care for our Air and Space families.

Improvements in human resources processes have positively impacted Child and Youth Programs by reducing on-boarding time and facilitating employee transfers. To retain trained staff, we implemented a non-appropriated fund employee transfer assistance program that enables transfer of employment from one Department of

the Air Force location to another, eliminating the requirement to apply for employment after a relocation. In addition, in response to staffing challenges, we implemented the DOD-wide compensation increase for childcare providers. We also are offering a robust Recruitment, Retention, and Special Employee Recognition Program for non-appropriated Child and Youth Program staff members at all installations.

*Economic Security*

A recent study conducted by DOD found that military compensation is very robust, grows quickly, and compares favorably with the private sector. For example, the report states that a single, 18-year-old, high school graduate who enlists earns \$43,500 (annual rate) beginning in the very first month of service. However, the Department of the Air Force acknowledges that compensation is a key factor in recruiting an all-volunteer force and retaining top talent, so we look forward to deeper dialog on this issue to ensure we have all the tools necessary to take care of the needs of our airmen, guardians, and their families.

Although the Department of the Air Force determined food insecurity has not significantly impacted our recruiting or retention efforts, taking care of our people is a top priority for the Department. We continue to support airmen, guardians, and families with multiple solutions to support financial readiness and opportunities to promote economic security across the force.

The Department of the Air Force is working with DOD to implement new policy supporting the Fiscal Year 2022 NDAA new Basic Needs Allowance legislation. This will provide supplemental income for military members and dependents whose gross household income falls below 130 percent of Federal poverty guidelines. The allowance will end once a member's income rises above established threshold.

CONCLUSION

Resilient and ready airmen and guardians, both military and civilian, are the bedrock of the Department of the Air Force's readiness and lethality. These professionals are evolving to compete, deter, and win with unmatched power in the air, space, and cyber domains. Our ability to remain competitive as an employer of choice is reliant upon prioritizing and resourcing what is most important. We look forward to continuing to partner with Congress in our endeavors to protect and defend our great Nation. We thank you for your continued support of your Department of the Air Force—those in uniform, our civilian professionals, and the families who support them.

Senator GILLIBRAND. Thank you, Lieutenant General.

Dr. Strobl, we are prepared to hear your opening statement.

**STATEMENT OF DR. MICHAEL STROBL, ACTING DEPUTY COMMANDANT FOR MANPOWER AND RESERVE AFFAIRS, UNITED STATES MARINE CORPS**

Mr. STROBL. Chair Gillibrand, Ranking Member Tillis, and distinguished members of this subcommittee, it is my distinct privilege to appear before you today to provide an overview of your Marine Corps' recruiting efforts.

As we approach the 50th anniversary of the all-volunteer force, we must remind ourselves that its success is not a given. It is predicated on our Nation's youth and their patriotic inclination to serve our Nation.

The reality is the Marine Corps is facing significant recruiting challenges. Residuals from COVID, a very tight labor market, historic lows in qualification rates propensity and the public perception of the military, and a fragmented advertising environment have made it increasingly difficult to recruit.

While we had to reduce our original fiscal year accession mission, an exceptional retention year enabled the Marine Corps to adjust its fiscal year 2022 accession goal only slightly, which our hard-working and dedicated recruiters are on track to meet while sustaining our high quality standards.

We are fortunate for the amazing youth who want to step up and experience the honor, courage, and commitment of being a Marine and part of our corps.

There are three things we must do to address these challenges.

One, modernize recruiting. Today's youth are on social media all the time. We are there, too, but we do not currently have the authority to implement modern tools for outreach to those who may be interested in serving.

We are, in some respects, still in the telephone book era. We are taking advantage of new high-tech tools in many areas of the military. We need them for recruiting, too.

No. 2, maintain and improve access to high schools. We thank Congress for its continued support for recruiter access to high schools and student directory lists.

This access remains critical to recruiting quality applicants. Without it, both Marine recruiters and interested students lose the most effective and productive means of communicating together about the opportunities for military service.

No. 3, we must create a national dialog on service. Those who serve in uniform departed our ranks with increased professionalism, leadership, education, skills, and a well earned sense of pride that set them up for life professionally and personally.

Marine veterans are leaders in industry, education, and government throughout our Nation, including the halls of Congress. There are incredible benefits, both tangible and intangible, that come with service in the military.

We must work together to change the narrative, to promote the value, so that our Nation's youth do not miss out on the benefits of service and our country does not miss out on them. We appreciate your support for these goals and for predictable funding we need to accomplish them.

Victory is a Marine Corps with improved readiness and lethality in combat and a force that fulfills our congressional mandate to be the most ready when our Nation is least ready today and on the battlefields of the future.

Our continued success in recruiting the best and brightest of our Nation's youth is foundational to that victory.

Semper fidelis.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Michael R. Strobl follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT BY MICHAEL R. STROBL

INTRODUCTION

Chair Gillibrand, Ranking Member Tillis, and distinguished Members of the Subcommittee, it is my privilege to appear before you today to provide an overview of your Marine Corps recruiting efforts. Your Marines are proud to serve their country—both during their service in uniform and in the private sector afterwards. The Marine Corps has long prided itself on its missions to “make Marines, win our Nation's battles, and return quality citizens to their communities.”

RECRUITING

We are approaching the 50-year anniversary of the All-Volunteer Force in our country. Just like a professionalized Staff and Non-Commissioned Officer Corps, the All-Volunteer Force is a strategic advantage for our military—generating talent and capability that translates into warfighting effectiveness, professional development, and leadership. There was, perhaps, a time in our country where an All-Volunteer Force was considered a “given”—service to our Nation and the military was viewed

as a desirable pathway to greater opportunities—both in and out of uniform. We can no longer be certain this is widely understood by our Nation’s youth. The Marine Corps realizes that young men and women may not be naturally inclined to serve, and, in fact, are hearing from many voices that military service is not a productive path to success.

*Recruiting Landscape.* The Marine Corps is facing significant enlisted recruiting challenges. The Commandant remains committed to providing adequate resources and the highest quality Marines to make the accession mission while sustaining quality, which is the bedrock of successful recruiting. During fiscal year 2022, we had to reduce our original accession mission; this reduction in accessions was mitigated by an exceptional retention year. Our dedicated and hard-working recruiters are on track to meet this adjusted goal. However, the residuals from COVID; labor market challenges; historic lows in qualification rates, propensity, and governmental approval; and a fragmented advertising environment have made it increasingly difficult to rebuild recruiting momentum.

Furthermore, our recruiting challenges will likely be multiplied next year. Given the current environment, the Marine Corps will have a lower than desired start pool for the fiscal year 2023 enlisted accession mission. We are projecting a fiscal year 2023 start pool of approximately 32 percent, whereas we traditionally target 53 percent and the previous historic low was 41 percent. This adds risk for next year beyond what we endured this year.

*What We Are Doing to Address the Challenge.* All Marine Corps recruiting efforts—officer, enlisted, regular, Reserve, and prior service—fall under the Marine Corps Recruiting Command. The Commanding General of Marine Corps Recruiting Command reports directly to the Commandant of the Marine Corps. The Commanding Generals of our two Marine Corps Recruit Training Depots also serve as the Commanding Generals of our Eastern and Western Recruiting Regions. Having the same individual responsible for quality recruiting and entry-level basic training is crucial to successfully recruiting and making Marines.

*Sustaining Quality.* The quality of your enlisted Marines remains exceptionally high. The Department of Defense (DOD) requires 90 percent of enlistees to have a high school diploma or equivalent (Education Tier 1), and 60 percent of enlistees to score in the Mental Groups I–III A (mental aptitude). So far this year, the Marine Corps achieved 99 percent for Education Tier 1, and over 67 percent for Mental Group I–III A. Additionally, we remain committed to assigning our best Marines to recruiting duty. Our recruiters closely reflect the face of the Nation we recruit, which is a testament to our efforts to recruit a diverse force. Approximately 47 percent of our recruiters have a diverse background, well above our Nation’s demographics as a whole. We connect with all communities by assigning Marines to cover every zip code in our Nation and constantly striving to reach all qualified youth and their influencers—from the most rural of small towns to the largest of cities.

*Expanding Markets.* This approach continues to be a good news story for recruiting diversity and females. Over the past decade, racially/ethnically diverse enlisted accessions increased from 33 percent to 48 percent; racially/ethnically diverse officer accessions more than doubled from 16 percent to 35 percent over the same period. Although impacted by COVID in fiscal year 2020/2021, enlisted female accessions have remained steady at 9 percent and officer female accessions have almost doubled from 8 percent to 15 percent.

*Adapting Advertising.* For future recruiting success, we must continue to adequately fund recruiting operations and advertising. Our Marine Corps advertising program is vital to building awareness among high-quality, diverse populations that are increasingly disconnected from military service. A strong advertising program enables our recruiting command to attract and recruit the highest quality accession cohorts. Advertising funds repay many times over, as they produce lower first-term attrition, higher quality Marines, and increased readiness. However, an increasingly fragmented media environment and media inflation rates approaching 20 percent in many cases have made maintaining program success exceptionally difficult.

*Where We Need Assistance.*

- *National Dialogue about Service.* Those who have served in uniform depart our ranks with increased professionalism, maturity, leadership, and skills that translate well into the civilian sector. Our veterans serve ably in industries, commercial sectors, and government throughout our Nation, bringing enhanced leadership and an exceptional work ethos back to their civilian communities. However, our messaging about service to our country competes within a crowded and fragmented media environment—which tries to tell a different story.

We must challenge the widespread misconceptions about military service. Data from the Office of People Analytics shows a decrease in youth connection and motivation to serve in the military within recent decades. Misperceptions and

perceived risks associated with military service often lead youth to view service as an option of last resort. Fifty-seven percent of youth polled believe servicemembers will have some form of psychological or emotional problem upon exiting service, while almost half believe they will have a physical injury or difficulty readjusting to everyday life. We are looking at ways to better inform young men and women, and their parents, about the value of honorable service in uniform.

- *Modernization of our Advertising Tools.* The law currently restricts the collection of personal data on applicants to only directory level information (address, telephone, email). This is really a remnant of the telephone-book age. We are looking into efforts to closely align with those of private industry and the digital age. These efforts could help identify prospective recruits, tailor marketing efforts, and better measure return on investment.
- *Access to High Schools.* We also thank Congress for its continued support of legislation that provides recruiters access to high schools and student directory lists. This access remains critical to recruiting quality applicants. Without it, our Marine Recruiters would lose the most efficient and productive means of conveying the opportunities of military service. Maintaining access to high schools and student directories remains a top priority for ensuring continued success.

#### RETENTION

Overall, we exceeded our retention goals in fiscal year 2022, and are on track to meet mission in fiscal year 2023. To be clear, although our recruiting conditions are challenging, once your Marines become Marines, they want to “stay Marine.” We are in a competitive market for talent—our Marines have choices and we seek to retain the very best Marines and then align their natural aptitudes and personal aspirations to our organizational goals.

At the same time, we recognize that we are in a war for talent—a competitive civilian job market and sister services provide enticing opportunities for highly-trained Marines to depart the Marine Corps. We must therefore be proactive to ensure that monetary and non-monetary incentives are adequate to maintain our retention goals. Talent Management 2030 (TM2030) describes a fundamental redesign of our personnel system in order to maximize the number of fully trained, qualified, experienced, and deployable Marines in the operational forces for any given budget. This vision will require that we better recruit and retain talent, modernize an assignments process consistent with our warfighting philosophy, introduce new measures to increase career flexibility, and optimize access to modern digital tools, processes, and analytics, consistent with industry standards.

Like Force Design, TM2030 will be a multi-year effort—a service-wide strategic design process that we have already begun to execute. Some of our initiatives were already underway prior to formal publication of TM2030; some of the new initiatives will require more time to ensure successful execution. We thank this Subcommittee and Congress for the retention authorities and flexibility you have given us. We employ many of these authorities and hold others in 8 should the need arise.

*Military Compensation.* In general, we believe that military pay is competitive and made even more so when accompanying benefits, such as housing and medical care, are taken into account. Currently, enlisted pay is in the top 15 percent of comparable pay in the private sector and officer pay is in the top 23 percent. This is even more important given that inflation is eroding the value of military pay as housing, gas, food, and other costs have soared. Inflation affects not just pay and compensation, but the value of the entire DoD budget. We don’t know all the impacts, short or long term, but we do know solutions aren’t simple or easy; for example, Basic Allowance for Housing (BAH) increases may actually cause an increase in rent prices in areas around installations, further fueling inflation. That is why we must study any new initiatives and programs for costs and potential adverse impacts.

We appreciate Congress’ passage of the new Basic Needs Allowance to supplement those junior grade servicemembers with gross household incomes that fall below the established Federal poverty guidelines who may be eligible. We are working with OSD to implement this new NDAA authority. We continue to collaborate with the Department of the Navy and the Office of the Secretary of Defense on economic security issues.

As always, we are implementing the use of monetary and non-monetary incentives, modernizing our performance evaluation systems, and refining the way we match and assign Marines to billets. Incentive pay remains critical to this effort. Selective Reenlistment Bonuses allow us to shape our career force by targeting crit-

ical military occupational specialties and supporting lateral movement of Marines to these billets.

In fiscal year 2022, we have implemented programs as part of the retention campaign designed to encourage reenlistment at the unit level as well as accelerating growth in specific Military Occupational Specialties (MOSs) that are expanding in support of Force Design 2030. Thank you, Congress, for support of the incentives and special pays that we use to target hard to fill MOSs, skills, and billets, e.g. aviators, cyber, and foreign language proficiency. Our aviation shortfalls are primarily in fixed wing billets; we have implemented an aviation bonus to address this issue. We are also leveraging technology to understand why individuals decide to join the Marine Corps as well as remain a Marine. These efforts include improving current data collection such as longitudinal accession, retention, and exit surveys, along with cognitive and non-cognitive testing. Our ultimate goal is identifying and fitting the right person, with the right skill, into the right billet.

We will continue to be agile in the Blended Retirement System (BRS) implementation. Although we do not yet have multi-year data on how the BRS affects retention efforts, we have taken action to increase the Continuation Pay multiplier to support the broader retention efforts. Effective January 1, 2023, the Marine Corps will increase the Continuation Pay multiplier from 2.5 times to 5.0 times monthly Basic Pay for Active and full-time Reserve Component Marines, and from 0.5 times to 1.0 times monthly Basic Pay for part-time Reserve Component Marines. These Continuation Pay multiplier increases signal to Marines that their continued service is valued.

*Non-monetary Incentives.* As we look forward to fiscal year 2023, we will continue to be proactive in our retention campaign. Two efforts are noteworthy in this regard. First, we will continue to provide novel non-monetary incentives—like the duty station incentive—to not only take care of Marines and their families, but also to ensure that Marines are in the right place to best support the service. Second, we also introduced the Commandant’s Retention Program as one of the Service’s latest non-monetary efforts to retain high performing Marines. Beginning for fiscal year 2023, we have leveraged the new Junior Enlisted Performance Evaluation System to identify the highest performing Marines in each job specialty based on established competitive metrics. These Marines were then able to reenlist through a dramatically streamlined process and receive “front-of-the-line” access to monitors and assignment preference considerations for their next set of orders.

*Data-driven, Commander-focused Personnel System.* TM2030 is a transparent, collaborative, data-driven, and commander-focused system to manage and improve talent. It will better focus on the individual talents of each Marine to enhance both individual and Service readiness and capability. With a modernized talent management system, we will better harness, develop, and retain the unique skills and strengths demanded of Marines by Force Design 2030 and in support of combatant commander needs. We have distilled TM2030 goals into three key lines of effort within the human resource enterprise: (1) Build and retain the talented force; (2) Manage and develop the talented force, and (3) Inform and interface with the talented force. Some of our current initiatives include:

*Improving MOS assignment.* We are developing a better, more predictive, data-driven matching tool that will optimally align applicant interest, Primary Military Occupational Specialty (PMOS) skill requirements, and the needs of the Marine Corps. By using our new Marine Corps Occupational Skills Matching (MCOSM) tool for enlisted Marines and Criteria Cognitive Aptitude Test (CCAT) for Marine officers, we plan to better align a person’s interests and talents with the needs of the service. Potential applications for MCOSM extend beyond accessions, and we plan to utilize it to assist in PMOS classifications and career retention. The overarching goal of MCOSM is to better align a Marine’s interests and skills in order to leverage talents to improve performance and thus increase their satisfaction and, ultimately, total Marine Corps retention.

*Retention Prediction Network (RPN).* We are currently developing the RPN, a program used to identify potential recruit’s likelihood to join and continue to serve through their first enlistment and beyond. RPN is a multi-year collaborative effort established between M&RA and Johns Hopkins University’s Applied Physics Lab that will harness vast quantities of manpower data in near-real time to provide USMC leadership with data-informed talent management decisions. The objective is to provide a new tool to help ensure we recruit the right individuals to the Marine Corps, with the right attitude for service, and the known willingness to see through the challenges of earning the Eagle, Globe, and Anchor.

*Personality screenings.* Our Tailored Adaptive Personality Assessment System (TAPAS) is a non-cognitive assessment the Marine Corps is using to help identify the personality and character attributes of a potential Marine. The Armed Services

Vocational Aptitude Battery provides details on a person's cognitive aptitude for service, but in the 21st century, we need more information to capitalize on better analysis, to understand the force we are recruiting and expecting to confront and defeat our adversaries. TAPAS will help us better understand the personality and character attributes of potential Marines. This program works in direct relation with MCOSM and RPN to provide a better and more holistic perspective on our Marines.

*Talent Marketplace.* Our Talent Management Engagement Portal (TMEP) seeks to modernize the current assignments system with a transparent, data-based environment that allows Marines, commands, and headquarters elements to collaborate on the assignments process. At full integration, it will use advanced analytics supported by artificial intelligence and machine learning elements to enable a market-style assignment system. It will allow for more informed decisions throughout a Marine's career providing data on factors including billet availability, assignment popularity, and potential career paths. Currently, this information is limited in accessibility or stored in several separate legacy systems, which hinders transparency and ease of use. Through an agile development approach backed by necessary resourcing, we will have a fully operational talent marketplace fielded to the fleet—at speed.

*Promotion Opt Out.* We appreciate this statutory authority provided by Congress and we've rapidly incorporated it into TM2030. Through its implementation, we are better able to create career paths that increase the diversity of experience in our leaders. This authority allows an officer to opt out of promotion without penalty, and enable them to complete a broadening assignment, advanced education, another assignment of significant value to the Marine Corps, or a career progression requirement delayed by the assignment or education. We implemented this authority in CY22 and will continue to assess program efficacy and measure the impacts on the deliberate development of our leaders.

*IT Systems Modernization.* Our talent management success will be dependent, more than anything else, on modern technology systems. We have been modernizing our IT portfolio and consolidating older, disparate systems into a small subset of interoperable multi-faceted applications that ride on a single IT system hosted in the cloud. Cloud migration allows the Marine Corps to gain IT efficiencies and effectively scale applications, databases, and services across the enterprise to meet emergent requirements in a dynamic environment. As more systems, services, and databases are migrated and refactored to cloud based applications, we will be able to engage in wide ranging optimization and be postured to capitalize on the promise of artificial intelligence and machine learning. These sophisticated, cloud-based, mobile-device accessible tools are the norm in the private sector and the same must be true in the Marine Corps in the near future. The ultimate goal is to have modern technology with significantly increased capabilities to supplement our personal management of Marines' careers.

*AI Implementation.* We are modernizing many of our legacy processes and manpower models used to access and assign Marines across the Force. Our collaboration with Johns Hopkins Applied Physics Laboratory to develop our RPN will enable our recruiters to better prepare future Marines to complete recruit training and their first enlistments. Several of our legacy manpower models are undergoing a significant transformation that leverages advanced data analytics to produce our recurring enlisted and officer staffing goals. Even the legacy process we use to assign Marines to course dates at their Primary MOS schools is being explored through our Enhanced Shipping Model.

*Virtual Boards.* Our Enlisted Career Retention Boards (ECRBs) strive to ensure that the Service retains the very best and most qualified Marines in competitive occupational specialties. These boards consist of voting members from throughout the Active Duty force and virtually from around the globe. In fiscal year 2022, we expanded the virtual boards to our first-term Marines as well. To further improve our board process, we developed Digital Boardroom 2.0, a cloud based application that increases the fidelity and accuracy of the information presented to board members to ensure that the best and most qualified Marines are selected.

*Understanding Impact.* Measuring the impacts of these initiatives, as well as others, is partially done through our Exit and Milestone Longitudinal Survey (EMLS). Using EMLS, Marines are solicited to provide feedback on personal and service satisfaction at specific milestones in their careers: upon entry, at first and subsequent reenlistments, when officers receive career designation, in conjunction with officer promotion selections (O4–O6), and at separation from a component of service. EMLS helps to inform recruitment and retention efforts by providing aggregated feedback to senior leadership from Marines at transitional career points.

*Taking Care of Marines and Their Families.* Our fighting effectiveness is not just built on unit training; it is also built and maintained with a Marine's support structure at home and within their communities. The talented force will have all the markers of the current Marine Corps—Marines in specialties, with specialty skills that contribute to the fighting effectiveness of our Corps. These talented Marines rely on the institution to provide them, their families, and, often times, their communities with stability. To that end, we recognize the importance of Marine and family stability and support as a major line-of-effort for successfully achieving our talent management goals.

The Marine Corps continues to be committed to implementing the Independent Review Commission's recommendations. The Secretary of Defense approved 82 IRC recommendations of which the services, including the Marine Corps have primary responsibility for 49. We are deliberately implementing these recommendations to align with departmental guidance and have milestones for all 49 of these recommendations.

*Permanent Change of Station (PCS) Flexibility.* PCS moves, while essential, can be disruptive to Marines and their families. Since 2016, we have worked to reduce PCS moves by issuing Permanent Change of Assignment (PCA) orders instead—these are local moves where a Marine changes units, but remains in the same geographic location, thus reducing disruption to operations, personnel, and families. Through TM2030, we will seek to further increase PCS flexibility, balancing it with both the needs of the individual Marine's career and those of the Marine Corps.

*Parental Leave.* Our Commandant early on made increasing parental leave a priority. As it stands today, a Marine who is the primary caregiver can take as much as 20 weeks of paid leave through use of multiple convalescence and other paid leave authorities, and can do so in flexible increments. We also recently increased secondary caregiver leave from two weeks to three weeks. Finally, we are working with the Department on the recent parental leave expansion authorities in the fiscal year 2022 NDAA.

*Child and Youth Programs.* High-quality child care is one of the many important child and youth programs we offer. It is a readiness priority for the Marine Corps. COVID-19 and the resulting protocols continue to significantly impact our child care capacity. Each installation is impacted differently by COVID-19 and operational status is based on local command needs, and circumstances. Modifications of daily operations are in place to mitigate social distancing and operation changes implementing the Center for Disease Control and Prevention guidelines. For our Child Development Centers, enrollment has steadily increased during fiscal year 2022. We currently have waitlists totaling approximately 1,400 children, primarily at Camp Pendleton, Hawaii, Quantico, and Camp Lejeune/New River. The waitlists are caused by a variety of factors, such as a shortage of qualified workers, high turnover/low pay, lengthy hiring process and facilities currently under renovations. An exacerbating factor is that 43 percent of the Marine families on the waitlist who we contact to offer a child care spot decline it; they instead decide to remain on the waitlist for a future spot. We are addressing child care waitlist issues through increased hiring and a non-competitive child care employee transfer program. We added \$135 million to the Child and Youth Program portfolio beginning fiscal year 2023 through 2027 to hire more employees at increased wages to help retain a professional workforce. We will build two new Child Development Centers beginning in 2024, one at Camp Pendleton and one at Quantico, to expand on base capacity and reducing the waitlist. We also offer child care fee assistance for eligible Marines who are geographically remote, reside more than 15 miles from an installation, or are assigned to an installation that has a significant wait list. In fiscal year 2021, nearly 1,200 children were enrolled in the fee assistance program at a total cost of over \$4.5 million. Finally, we appreciate all the additional funding and support Congress has provided in recent years to improve child care delivery in all of its forms.

*Spouse Employment.* Spouse unemployment is a concern for many Marine Corps families and can be an obstacle for financial security and readiness of that Marine. Family Member Employment Assistance Program (FMEAP) is available at each Marine Corps installation and provides employment related referral services, career and skill assessments, career coaching, job search guidance, portable career opportunities, and education center referrals/ guidance. We have a transfer process in place that makes it easier for military spouses working in a CDC to transfer to an open position in the CDC at their next duty station. We are also able to reimburse Marine spouses up to \$1,000 for state licensure and certification costs arising from relocation to another state. To assist transitioning spouses, we also offer Spouse Transition and Readiness Seminar (STARS). STARS provides military spouses with a comprehensive overview of information and resources needed to prepare for transition into the civilian world including career and education information.

## DIVERSITY

Taking advantage of the wide array of experiences, perspectives, and talent of all Marines is necessary to maintain our current and future warfighting excellence. We recruit and retain the very best to ensure we are able to deliver a ready force that our Nation requires. We are committed to capitalizing on the knowledge, skills, abilities, performance, and potential of every Marine. Diversity—both in race and ethnicity—in the Marine Corps is improving. Since 2009, racially/ethnically diverse enlisted accessions have increased from 34 percent to 48 percent, and racially/ethnically diverse officer accessions have increased from 16 percent to 35 percent. In addition, female officer accessions have increased from 8 percent to 15 percent during this time period. Females represented in previously restricted MOS are also on the rise. Last year, 1,178 females were in previously restricted units; that number is now 1,306. Similarly, 422 women were serving in previously restricted MOS; today that number is 531, including the first woman Reconnaissance Marine. Currently, nearly 24 percent of Brigadier Generals and Brigadier General-selects are diverse, the highest level of diverse representation at that rank in Marine Corps history. We look forward to seeing this trend continue. Our recent Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Strategic Plan will contribute to our actions over the next several years in the areas of recruiting and accessions, talent management, education, training, and commandership. It provides a framework to align a number of efforts, identify new initiatives, and provide oversight across the Corps for implementation by commanders at every level.

## CONCLUSION

Our highest priority and primary objective is recruiting, developing, and retaining elite warriors in the highest state of combat readiness to support and defend our great Nation. Every recruiting, retention, and talent management initiative that we undertake must demonstrably or logically contribute to this objective and enable the capabilities and capacities of Force Design to be realized.

The challenges to accomplishing our recruiting, retention, and talent management goals are many. We must continue to recruit the best of our Nation's youth to serve and we must do so in an environment that has shown shrinking propensity and eligibility to serve, exacerbated by COVID-19, industrial age limitations on recruiter outreach, and rapidly rising costs of advertising our message of honor, courage, and commitment. Retention is also proving more and more challenging as the civilian job market continues to rebound and provide high pay for the exquisite skills Marines possess. These challenges are all the more reason why we need to reach out to every sector of our diverse Nation, while ensuring the readiness of the Force and our Marine families. Our measure of success is a Marine Corps with improved performance and lethality in combat which enables us to fulfill our Congressional mandate to be 'most ready when the Nation is least ready,' today and on the battlefields of the future.

*Semper fidelis.*

Senator GILLIBRAND. Thank you all for your testimony.

Ms. Miller, in 2020, DOD issued its 13th Quadrennial Review of military compensation. Among the findings and recommendations the report noted that for certain military career fields such as cyber, military pay falls behind pay in the civilian labor market.

The report recommended a study to examine a more expansive view of military pay, including special incentive pays for target—to target at recruitment and retention.

Has DOD conducted this study and, if so, what impacts are special and incentive pays having on recruitment and retention in especially high demand occupations like cyber?

Ms. MILLER. Ma'am, thank you for that question.

We continue to conduct that review and formulate that into the final report for the committee. We agree that in looking at our force structure and looking at recruitment and retention that critical skills such as cyber and information warfare technology are some of the not only hardest to recruit but the hardest to retain.

And so we agree with you, ma'am, that it will be important to have flexible and responsive incentive packages not only with reg-

ular military compensation but with additional bonus authority to be able to respond to the demand signal that we see in not only recruiting them, training them, but then retaining them.

Part of that is also looking at the community itself and looking as to whether that traditional career path that we have within the Department of Defense is the right career path for that skill set and that talent, whether we need more permeability between active and reserve and whether we need more permeability into the civilian sector so that we can kind of keep and leverage those skill sets.

So we are committed to working with the committee and with you, ma'am, to make sure that we have the right authorities that we need to be able to respond to that demand.

Senator GILLIBRAND. And when do you expect to give those recommendations, especially with regard to permeability?

Ms. MILLER. Ma'am, that is something that we continue to work on and particularly with respect to duty status reform, and so we are working on that this year and I will commit to providing the committee an update within the next quarter.

Senator GILLIBRAND. Okay.

General Miller, as the Air Force modernizes and prepares for the future of our Nation's defense, we know that attracting and retaining high-quality airmen is critical to our capabilities such as cyber, intelligence, and electronic warfare. We also know that the private sector competes aggressively for the people with these capabilities.

What is the Air Force doing to ensure it is attracting and keeping personnel in critical skills such as cyber and what additional authorities does the Air Force need in this area that it currently does not have?

Lieutenant General MILLER. Madam Chairwoman, thank you for the question. We actually have a Cyber Task Force right now that is looking specifically at that and how do we, similar to what Ms. Miller talked about, is how do we attract those individuals.

There is absolutely a fight for talent right now, especially in those areas, and so similarly to what Ms. Miller talked about, but we are also looking at how do we manage the force differently.

So one of the taskers that the chief has given me was to say, okay, we have got—we have to look at things differently. How can we attract the individuals, and then we are also looking at where can we attract them.

We have a lot of partnerships with industry right now and that we are doing. Often we send airmen out to them, but what we are trying to do is get some of the those high industry and the cyber career fields and other areas in to us so they can they can work on different projects, they can train our individuals, and then it provides additional talking points out in the industry of what we are capable of doing.

But we are—I think that probably all of us are struggling to figure out how to get that talent. Some of our policies prevent us from—right now prevent us from paying them what we should.

We did increase some of their—some of the cyber specialties bonus money and so we are we are looking at everything available right now, ma'am.

Senator GILLIBRAND. And then, Admiral Cheeseman—  
[Off microphone.]

Senator GILLIBRAND.—military service at least invested in developing and maintaining cyber capabilities. The Navy lags the other services in readiness on the cyber mission force and places very few officers in cyber-specific billets.

What is the Navy's plan to grow its cyber dedicated personnel and what recruiting and retention challenges do you face?

Admiral CHEESEMAN. Senator, thank you very much for the question.

Our marketing and advertising campaign—the digital “Forged by the Sea” campaign—specifically targets cyber fields on social media to get at this recruiting challenge. We also target job search sites to get at the recruiting challenge as well. We partner with various STEM [science, technology, engineering and mathematics] affinity groups for community outreach in support of generating additional talents.

On the legislation side, we do support increases to the targeted bonuses—statutory increases to the targeted bonuses and specialized skill pay. We think that will go a long way in retaining the personnel we need, ma'am.

Senator GILLIBRAND. Thank you so much.

Senator Tillis?

Senator TILLIS. I will defer to Senator Hawley and Tuberville and take less.

Senator Hawley?

Senator HAWLEY. Thank you very much to the Ranking Member and thank you, Madam Chair, and thanks to the witnesses for being here.

General Stitt, let me talk with you. Let me start with you, if I could.

I have spoken repeatedly with the Secretary of the Army about replacing aging homes at Fort Leonard Wood in my home State, and there is no doubt in my mind that servicemembers deserve better than they are getting right now.

I was just there a few weeks ago. I toured the homes myself. I spoke to residents. I spoke to spouses. I spoke to children who lived in the homes.

These homes need to be replaced. What concerns me is the Army does not seem to have a plan to replace this aging housing stock. So let me just ask you this.

In your opinion, how does the availability or maybe lack of availability of quality military housing for servicemembers and their families affect recruiting and retention?

Lieutenant General STITT. Senator Hawley, good afternoon.

The Army takes the care and quality of life of all of our servicemembers and their families very seriously. So we are making and committed to investing in our housing within—not just that but within our daycare centers, childcare, offering opportunities, expanding beyond that for spousal employment, to put kind of a whole package on the table to ensure that our facilities and our care and commitment toward family members is first class.

Senator HAWLEY. You say a whole package. When will we be seeing this package?

Lieutenant General STITT. Senator, we continue to work on it and I can take that question for the record, please.

[The information referred to follows:]

Lieutenant General STITT. The Army has a sacred obligation to take care of our Soldiers and Families; doing so is a national security imperative. The Secretary of the Army chartered a Quality of Life (QoL) Task Force in March 2020 to review the full range of Army care, support, and enrichment programs with an emphasis on improving housing, healthcare, childcare, spouse employment, permanent change of station moves, and support and resilience programs. This QoL package is in a continuum of deliverance to all camps, posts, and stations, to include Fort Leonard Wood, MO. We continue to make significant and meaningful improvements in these areas and recognize there is more work to be done.

Concerning the housing situation specific to Fort Leonard Wood, a land sale and accumulated section 606(a)(2) contributions will potentially bring \$42.4 million into the project. The Army has identified approximately 1,142 older homes on this installation that need to be replaced or renovated over time. The houses are part of the Balfour Beatty Communities (BBC) privatized housing portfolio, and the Army is diligently working with BBC on a plan to expedite replacement of these homes.

For support and resilience, the Army is investing \$4.6 million in two morale, welfare and recreation projects at Fort Leonard-Wood; one to expand the outdoor recreation center and construct six cabins at the Lake of the Ozarks Recreation area. Regarding childcare, Fort Leonard Wood currently has no identifiable need for additional child development center (CDC) construction projects. Fort Leonard Wood is also included as part of recent enterprise-wide recruiting and retention efforts in Child Youth and School Services (CYSS) employees which includes: an increased minimum hourly salary to \$16.70, priority access and a 50 percent discount for childcare, and paid training to earn their Child Development Associate credential. In addition, the Civilian Employee Assignment Transfer program allows all eligible nonappropriated fund level 3 and below positions to transfer to other Army Installations worldwide, including CYSS employees, without a break in service.

Senator HAWLEY. That is fine. I mean, but let me just say again for the record—I have said this in the full committee, I will say it again here—that I think we are past the point of continuing to kick this down the road. I mean, this is a problem now. Frankly, at Fort Leonard Wood it was a problem a decade ago.

But, listen, I have been there. I mean, I have seen it myself. I have talked to the servicemembers myself. I have been in their houses. I have been in their kitchens. I looked at their bathrooms where there is mold growing. I have seen the—they do not have places for their kids. I have seen the substandard living conditions and it just is not acceptable, General.

You know what? I promised those servicemembers that I would be a royal pain in the you know what until something changed. So I am keeping that commitment and I am going to continue it until something changes.

And, frankly, I have heard this now for—it is going on 2 years. I have only been in the Senate three but I have heard it continuously that, well, we will get to it. We will get to it. We will get to it.

Well, at Fort Leonard Wood we have not gotten to it, and I bet—if we went around the table here, I bet that the other members of the subcommittee would have the same situation in their states.

So I will give you the question for the record. But I just want to put on notice again, and you can take this back, that I want to see some progress on this and I want to see it soon. And what I do not want to see are any more commitments from the Army that they are going to spend X number of dollars—this happened last year—we are going to commit X number of dollars to Fort Leonard Wood and then as it turns out zero dollars were spent on housing. I am still ticked off about that and I do not want to see it happen again and I want to see progress made.

So that is my piece. I think you understand where I am coming from.

General Miller, let me come to you. Can you help me with something here?

Andersen Air Force Base, I understand—this is in Guam, of course—leaders there recently received an official email that prohibited them from using pronouns or descriptors like he/she, youngest/oldest, male or female.

Why is that? I mean, what is going on?

Lieutenant General MILLER. Senator Hawley, thank you for that question.

Actually, that is—we have been talking a lot about that because it was an email, from my understanding, that went out locally from one of the commanders there, and I do not remember at what level. I do not know if it was a group commander or the wing commander there.

I believe that it was a Facebook post that went out based on a question. It is not the Air Force policy to not use pronouns, and so I think it was a social media—you know, exacerbated by individuals that said that they were directed for that.

Senator HAWLEY. Okay. Good. Well, I think that is progress.

So you are saying—I am looking at a news article here published August 31, 2022, saying that PACAF [Pacific Air Force] has been—has sent this letter around. Leaders of the base are instructed do not use pronouns, age, race, et cetera, and they go on. The unauthorized—examples of unauthorized language are male/female, youngest/oldest, he/she. But you are saying that that is not—that was not an official communication—that has not been a directive?

Lieutenant General MILLER. That is not an official communication from the HAF. Correct.

Senator HAWLEY. Okay. Okay. And so your position to me is today that that is not policy and that they have not been so instructed—

Lieutenant General MILLER. That is correct. That is not policy.

Senator HAWLEY.—that this is social media kerfuffle? I mean, this is not real? It is not happening?

Lieutenant General MILLER. I do not know if it is not happening but it is not an official policy from the Department of the Air Force.

Senator HAWLEY. Okay. I ask because part of the way it has been reported is that the rationale is to help with lethality and also recruiting, and I just was curious as heck how not using he/she can help with lethality and how it is helping with recruiting.

But I take your word for it that this is not policy and that satisfies me. So thank you.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

Senator GILLIBRAND. Thank you.

Senator HIRONO?

Senator HIRONO. Thank you, Madam Chair.

Recruiting and retaining female servicemembers is essential for our military readiness and national security. Yet, women are more likely to leave service than their male peers given frustrations with family planning, gender bias, and discrimination, not to mention sexual assault and sexual harassment.

And now following the disastrous Dobbs decision that has created fear, chaos, and confusion all across the country, servicemembers' reproductive and healthcare rights have become dependent on their duty station.

Last week, the RAND Corporation published a report indicating that 40 percent of female servicemembers no longer have access to or have severely restricted access to abortion services where they are stationed.

This will not only harm individual servicemembers but will likely have staggering impacts on our ability to recruit and retain women.

In June, I sent a letter to Secretary Austin urging DOD to support and protect female servicemembers seeking reproductive services.

I would like to ask Ms. Miller—General Miller.

Senator GILLIBRAND.

[Off microphone.]

Senator HIRONO. Okay. General Miller?

[Laughter.]

Senator HIRONO. Okay. Well, thank you for that. Either one of you, frankly, or any of you, has not the Supreme Court's decision made it even more challenging to recruit and retain women?

Ms. MILLER. Thank you for that question, ma'am. Secretary Austin has made clear that the health and well being of servicemembers and their families is a top priority and that includes the access to reproductive care.

And so we agree that while technically that the rules governing access to covered versus noncovered abortion care was not necessarily affected by the outcome of the Supreme Court decision, we do recognize that the outcome may make it more difficult for servicemembers to electively choose a noncovered abortion and it could make it more difficult to travel and to—they may incur additional expenses.

And so we are committed to taking a look at the full range of our current authorities and policies and make sure that we are providing information and support where appropriate.

Senator HIRONO. I think this is a real concern because you have servicemembers who are serving in states such as Alabama, Tennessee. There was a whole, you know, number of, basically, Southern states where they would have to travel a long ways in order to get reproductive or abortion services.

So I would like to know what the Department of Defense plans to do to enable the servicemembers to get the care and the services that they need in the reproductive area.

So that is just—let me just put it out there.

For Ms. Miller, one of the top reasons servicemembers, particularly women, choose not to join, remain, or leave the Armed Forces is the impact military service has on family planning, and across the U.S. and around the world egg freezing and in vitro fertilization are commonly used for individuals who wish to have children in the future, but for personal and professional reasons they delay.

In July, I called on DOD to study the impact and costs of offering cryopreservation to servicemembers, something that I understand the—Great Britain does provide these kinds of options.

Ms. Miller, would covering the cost of cryopreservation under TRICARE be something the Department could consider to improve retention rates?

Ms. MILLER. Ma'am, I think that is a good question. Unfortunately, I am not a subject matter expert per se in that area, although I know that our health affairs colleagues continue to look at that possibility, and I commit to you that we will take that question for the record and provide a followup.

Senator HIRONO. Thank you very much.

One more thing. I heard—I think it was Dr. Strobl—talk about the importance of having access to high schools. All of you are really engaging in recruiting at a much younger age, and so for high schools there was a report in the New York Times that there were 33 cases of instructor misconduct in the Junior ROTC program, and how are you going to address this kind of misconduct?

You talk about wanting access to high schools but that is not going to work very well if your instructors are engaging in sexual harassment, other kinds of misconduct.

So are you aware of the problem? And this is where, Dr. Strobl, since you mentioned wanting access. So how will you demonstrate that the recruiters and military personnel can be trustworthy?

Mr. STROBL. Senator, thank you for that question, and I share your concern in this area.

We have implemented enhanced training of all of our Marines from even before they enlist all the way up until the general officer level to ensure that they understand the zero tolerance policy for sexual assault and sexual harassment.

Even before the Independent Review Commission (IRC) recommendations the Marine Corps moved out in fiscal year 2022 by nearly doubling its budget for sexual assault prevention training, response coordinators, victim advocates, and prevention coordinators.

We are in the process of hiring 120 of these types of skills to distribute around the Marine Corps to get after this problem.

Then there is the Independent Review Commission. We support all 82 of the recommendations of the commission and we are committed to spending \$560 million to hire and train 826 prevention response coordinators and behavioral health experts to help us eradicate sexual assault and sexual harassment.

Senator HIRONO. Is this an issue—Madam Chair, if I may—are the other services also paying attention to this kind of problem behavior in your Junior ROTC programs?

Air Force?

Lieutenant General MILLER. Yes. Yes, we are. Absolutely.

In fact, before the IRC report we actually had a substantial preventive workforce organization, and so with the recommendations from the IRC we are implementing them across the service.

We also just started a pilot program at seven different installations right now in which we are co-locating all of the helping services for victims.

What we want to do—and we have got it on—and in the area of those installations in which the victims can go there and it is not—not everybody will know why they are going there. So it provides them privacy.

I will also say on the particular case in which you are talking about or the article that was in the New York Times on the Junior ROTC, I mean, sexual assault is a crime. I mean, it is a crime and we take it very seriously.

We are actually looking to expand Guard and Reserve into the Junior ROTC programs as an initiative to make sure that there is a little bit more oversight.

Right now the Junior ROTC programs across the United States are vast and there is only about seven different regional folks that actually monitor them. There is a requirement that they are supposed to be assessed in person—an institution—once a year.

But right now, there is not enough individuals to do that. So we are looking at all of those avenues from the Air Force perspective, ma'am.

[Additional testimony submitted by the witness to expand testimony from the hearing:]

Lieutenant General MILLER. Headquarters AFJROTC (HQ AFJROTC), assigned to the Jeanne M. Holm Center, which reports to Air University and Air Education and Training Command, respectively manages Day-to-Day operations and management activities. The AFJROTC Program consists of 870 geographically separated units dispersed throughout eight regions. The Operations Division performs AFJROTC Unit oversight and compliance monitoring activities. The Division currently consists of one Division Chief and nine Regional Directors. Each Regional Director oversees 97 units, performs day-to-day oversight activities, and evaluates the compliance, cost, and performance objectives of assigned AFJROTC Units. Local AFJROTC Unit Instructors conduct annual self-inspections, with onsite compliance visits conducted by HQ AFJROTC staff approximately every 3 years. The Holm Center has requested a manpower study to determine if HQ AFJROTC manpower support is adequate for effective program oversight and management, the study results are anticipated to be published in early calendar year 2023.

Additionally, it is becoming increasingly difficult to attract qualified candidates to fill JROTC instructor positions, so legislation is needed to expand JROTC instructor eligibility. Currently, 10 U.S.C. § 2031 states that retired Active Duty and reserve officers and non-commissioned officers are eligible to serve as JROTC instructors. Considering the expansion of eligibility to include other officers and noncommissioned officers who are active members of the Reserve components of the United States Armed Forces or who are Veterans or Retirees separated under honorable conditions and who otherwise meet the suitability qualifications as determined by the Secretary of the military department concerned would enable a larger JROTC instructor candidate pool and could mitigate instructor shortfalls in under-served communities.

Senator GILLIBRAND. Thank you.

Senator Tuberville? And we will go through the rest of the services to answer that question when it is my turn. So we will complete it for the record.

But go ahead, Senator Tuberville.

Senator TUBERVILLE. Thank you, Madam Chair.

Thank you all very much for being here today. You all got a tough job. I recruited for a long time. I know how hard it is.

So you have got a challenge, especially when only one out of every five American youth is eligible to join the military. Drugs, obesity, the lack of education, criminal activity—they prevent a lot of our young people from even wanting to get in the military. That is hard enough.

But this administration has made the job so much harder for you. I feel bad for you. The number-one reason young people join the military is they have a family connection. Military is a family

business. Eighty percent of our force has a family member presently enlisted.

After watching this administration's blunder in Afghanistan, tossing 20 years of sacrifice down the drain, why would a veteran encourage their child sign up? I know you are running into that problem.

So this administration does not inspire our youth about America. It paints our servicemembers as extremists, white supremacists, but are surprised that only 9 percent—only 9 percent—of young people even want to serve. That is a small, small pool.

Faith in our military has collapsed for decades. Our military was the most trusted organization in America. Under President Biden, trust in the military has cratered 45 percent. What we have is a national security emergency.

Secretary Miller, I reviewed the list of speaking engagements for senior leaders at the Pentagon and could find no trace—zero—of anyone speaking publicly about recruiting—the leaders of our military.

But there were plenty of speeches on climate change, Pride Month, and global water security. What is going on here? What actions have the Department of Justice (DOJ) leaders taken to solve this crisis?

Secretary Miller?

Ms. MILLER. Thank you, Senator, for that question.

The senior leadership of the Department, from Secretary Austin, Secretary Hicks, to the secretaries of the military departments, are absolutely focused on the issue of recruiting and critical retention, and we do see our senior leaders engaging on this topic.

Just as recently as this past weekend we had Army senior leadership that was on the "Today Show" talking about this issue because we agree with you that it is important to get our message out to youth and influencers about the opportunities that service affords and to kind of cut through the chaff that you mentioned on some of the more provocative rhetoric that is often shaped by well intentioned but, perhaps, misinformed external providers.

And so we agree that through strategic marketing and advertising, strategic engagements by our senior leadership inside the Department, that we do have a role to play to ensure that the right information is getting to the right people at the right time about the opportunities that military service affords.

Senator TUBERVILLE. I know you all are great recruiters but our leaders—our President and our leaders in the military that are seen on TV every day—I know they are busy. We got a dangerous world we are living in.

But they have got to spend time on helping us recruit. I mean, we need everybody on board. This panel—we have heard a lot of concerns or critiques but I want to, first, take a moment to commend the United States Marine Corps. The Marines are the only service currently to meet the fiscal year 2022 recruiting numbers. Well done.

The Marines are meeting their numbers because they stick to talking about defending our Nation. Compare any Marine Corps' recruiting ad to the Army's woke campaign and you will see why the Marine Corps is meeting its numbers.

“The Calling” campaign of the Army was so widely trashed that they had to turn off comments on YouTube, and I saw it. I mean, it is not what this country looks for when we are talking about military and defending our freedom.

Dr. Strobl, are there any legal or policy changes that Congress could direct that would allow the services to modernize recruiting efforts and to be more effective with their current budget?

Mr. STROBL. Senator, I am glad you asked that question.

I do think there are some things we need to look at as far as accessing data. When a potential applicant, for example, comes to marines.com we would like to be able to use modern tools to be able to send targeted advertising to that applicant when they leave our website.

So if they click on a picture of a howitzer we might be able to later have a howitzer show up on something else that they might be looking at.

To do that requires us moving out of the telephone book era, just having social directories that the high schools provide us.

Senator TUBERVILLE. Yes. Thank you.

And along some of those same lines, to add insult to injury, the White House has now decided to cancel up to \$20,000 student loan per borrower. Student loan forgiveness and the GI Bill are two of the biggest and most successful incentives for military recruitment.

To your knowledge, any of you, were the consequences of military service recruiting considered during the recent student loan forgiveness? Anybody want to answer that?

Ms. MILLER. Senator, I can answer that.

Certainly, for any strategic decision all of the Federal agencies are asked for input and the White House does take that under consideration.

As for the training and education incentives that the Department of Defense offers, there is still a robust package that we can offer to young men and women who are interested in joining the services and one of the unique things that we have that, perhaps, other programs do not have is that under certain conditions you can actually extend those benefits to your family members.

And so we still believe that we have a very competitive package to offer to young men and women and, potentially, their families.

Senator TUBERVILLE. Health care, GI bill—

Ms. MILLER. Yes, sir.

Senator TUBERVILLE.—going to school, paying for school. I mean, they work for welfare benefits. Okay. We all know that. We have all seen it and heard about it, and we need to correct some of this.

But I want to end this on—I read an article from Thomas Spoehr of—the national defense director of Heritage and he says the American military remains a faithful and loyal servant of the republic.

Most Americans are still proud and trusting of our military. But this trust and support cannot be taken for granted. If Americans perceive that the military is being exploited for political purpose or being used for experiments and woke social priorities, that support will evaporate and the consequences will be dire.

My hope and prayer are that we figure out all this before it is too late.

Thank you very much.

Senator GILLIBRAND. Thank you.  
Senator Warren?

Senator WARREN. Thank you, Madam Chair, and I am so glad that Senator Tuberville raised the question of debt forgiveness.

I am sure he is aware that the debt forgiveness package that was designed by the President has disproportionately helped veterans who are struggling with student loan debt because our current benefits do not fully cover the cost of post-high school education for them, and I am glad to get them any help we can.

So I want to echo my colleagues' concerns about the impact of military sexual assault on recruiting and retention. The Department of Defense found that reports of sexual assault went up 13 percent in 2021, showing that we are, clearly, going in the wrong direction.

But I also want to followup on an issue raised by Senator Hirono. One of the key tools that our military has for recruitment is the Junior Reserve Officers Training Corps (JROTC) program. The JROTC program is led by retired members of the military and it is meant to teach high school students the values of citizenship.

DOD is currently studying how this program impacts enlistment, as they should. But a previous Army study found that these students are more than twice as likely to enlist. Unfortunately, in too many cases it has become also a hunting ground for predators.

A recent disturbing investigation by the New York Times found that at least 33 JROTC instructors have been criminally charged with sexual misconduct, which is higher than the rate for civilian school teachers.

Ms. Miller, obviously, if JROTC instructors are sexually assaulting high school students we have a problem that goes far, far beyond the impact of this behavior on recruitment.

But I want to ask, how do you think criminal behavior like this by retired members of the armed services reflects on the military?

Ms. MILLER. Senator, thank you for that question.

We agree that the reports from the New York Times are concerning, not only in the fact that this is a criminal act but to the point that you made that it also reverberates with respect to potential recruitment and just casts a pall on the JROTC program, which, as you noted, is a program that we are very proud of, both of the citizenship development program and as a way to expose youth to the prospect of military service since many of them have never had that exposure.

We completely agree that additional oversight is necessary and, as General Miller mentioned, the services are actively engaged at looking at their current oversight structures.

We also think that we need to take a hard look at our current background investigation process. Regardless of whether that individual had a background investigation, a background investigation recently conducted while they were in service, and that we need to look even beyond our traditional background investigation to see if there is other tools that we need to add to that such as, potentially, social media checks to make sure that we get a 360-degree look at those that we are putting in a leadership role to some of our most vulnerable and young Americans.

Senator WARREN. I very much appreciate this and I am glad that you give a full answer on this. But I would like to stress another point here. You are talking about background checks—obviously, powerfully important before somebody gets out there.

But there is also a question about supervision once they are in the field and a question about how to respond when there has been some kind of concern or allegation raised.

And I want to give you an example that goes directly to that. The New York Times piece tells the story of Dominique Mixon, a young woman who entered the JROTC program because she wanted to join the Air Force. That is why she was there.

She was groped and harassed by her instructor, Brad Gibson, who had retired after 24 years of service in the military. But here is the part that really pushes me on this.

She reported the incident to a teacher. Apparently, Mr. Gibson had already been counseled about, quote/unquote, “borderline behavior” before he stuck his hand up Ms. Mixon’s shirt. So this was not the first time that he had harassed someone but it was not the last time either.

Ms. Mixon’s report went nowhere and she was pushed out of the program.

Mr. Gibson, however, continued to lead the JROTC program, and 8 years later Ms. Mixon received a call that another 16-year-old had filed a report saying that Mr. Gibson was groping her.

General Miller, should the Air Force be protecting someone like Ms. Mixon or someone like Mr. Gibson?

Lieutenant General MILLER. Thank you, Senator, for letting me talk about this.

So the first thing is sexual assault, sexual harassment, they are crimes. They are crimes and they are not tolerable, and I will tell you in the Air Force we have a very strong preventive program right now and we are making it more robust, specifically on the IRC.

But we—for Junior ROTC or for any individual that is harassed sexually or any way that they are not treated with dignity and respect they need to report it and they need to report it up and we need to investigate it.

So should the individual in this particular case—he should have been investigated and substantiated he is removed from that position forever.

And so and, ma’am, just one more. You talked about oversight, and there—for Junior ROTCs there are so many programs and there is very little oversight.

In the Air Force right now we are looking at putting Guard and Reserve members into some of those programs to provide additional oversight in that and then also increase the regional directors that are around the world—around the country right now.

Senator WARREN. This is an important point you raise because jurisdiction at the Federal level is shared between the military services and the Department of Education. But if the military does not step up to prevent these kinds of abuses then it is the military that is endangering our ability to buildup our force for the future and for it to have real credibility.

The military screens these instructors and, ultimately, it is your reputation on the line.

I know that my colleagues and I have a number of questions about the oversight of this program and why it failed these students.

Today, we sent letters to the DOD and to the Department of Education to try to learn more, and I look forward to learning what steps each of you will be taking to make sure that the military is not responsible for the sexual assault of high school students.

I see that I am over on time but I do want to just followup with a question about student loan debt, and that is loan cancellation right now is helping 43 million Americans who are buried under student loan debt.

It is keeping people from starting small businesses, from buying homes, from starting families. I just want to ask the question, do any of the witnesses think that ensuring that 43 million Americans keep choking on student loan debt is the best solution to the military's recruitment problems?

Ms. MILLER. Senator, I appreciate that question.

We agree that when we are working with potential applicants I can say that we do look at debt ratio in terms of what debt they may have and how they may be able to still continue to execute their commitment to paying off that debt under our pay structures, particularly if they are starting as a junior enlisted servicemember.

It is something that we do pay attention to. We do have strong programs, as I said before, for training and education, which includes the ability to do additional incentives for loan repayment.

What we actually do find on our side is that in many cases they are actually more interested in looking at what bonuses we offer because then they have greater flexibility in how they want to use that money and, potentially, paying off that debt or if they want to put it toward another priority.

But we do agree that looking at current debt ratio is something that we do pay attention to.

Senator WARREN. I think maybe I did not make my question entirely clear and that is on me.

But I just really want to emphasize the point that surely we have not become a country that thinks that the best way to be able to recruit people into the military is to crush them under a burden of student loan debt and hope that they will then find their way to the military—that we are people who want to show the best of what the military has to offer and work to make sure that none of our young people are crushed by student loan debt.

I hope we are all in agreement on that. I will take that as a yes. Thank you.

Senator GILLIBRAND. Thank you, Senator Warren.

Senator Tillis?

Senator TILLIS. Ms. Miller, I suspect that there are at least some otherwise qualified recruits who may opt not to go into the military because of the COVID vaccine mandate. You all put that policy in place in August 2021.

That is before we knew a lot about—that is before we knew about Omicron. That is before we knew about the vaccine is only marginally effective at preventing the spread.

I had COVID in 2020. I got vaccinated. I had COVID again. So in light of what we know today, is the Department considering maybe revising or retracting that requirement or at least using waivers if we have otherwise qualified recruits?

Ms. MILLER. Senator, I appreciate that question.

I can say as of right now the Department currently has no plans to eliminate the COVID-19 vaccine mandate. We strongly do believe that vaccine requirements significantly enhance the readiness of our force and diminish the threat of serious illness.

Senator TILLIS. Do we have any data on people who are in the recruiting pipeline that have otherwise opted out because of the vaccine mandate?

Ms. MILLER. Sir, we do have some survey data where we have asked. We do market survey data where we asked if the requirement to become vaccinated is a deterrent to considering joining the military services and the vast number of respondents actually responded that no, it did not significantly influence them one way or the other.

The other thing that we implemented was an attestation form during the early recruitment phase where if they had not already been vaccinated we asked them to indicate their willingness to be vaccinated for a wide range of conditions once arriving at basic training, as we have always done.

We have not seen a significant number of potential applicants decline to endorse that form nor have we seen a significant number of applicants who, once arriving to basic training, have then declined to actually become vaccinated.

Senator TILLIS. Thank you.

General Stitt, the Secretary of the Army has created a task force to make recommendations on Army recruiting practices. Tell me a little bit about the composition of the task force and when we could expect a work product.

Lieutenant General STITT. Senator Tillis, the Army Recruiting Retention Task Force is headed up by a two-star general, Major General Deb Kotulich, and has subject matter expertise from across the Department staff, United States Army Recruiting Command, Training and Doctrine Command, Medical Command.

All of the subject matter experts are participating and this group has been given the charter, quite simply, to look at our recruiting and retention enterprise and tear it down to the studs and see what is out there—what policies, procedures do we need to look at to set the conditions in 2023, 2024, and beyond, Senator.

Senator TILLIS. Thank you. And, again, the timeframe for coming up with recommendations?

Lieutenant General STITT. Senator, they present recommendations biweekly to the chief and the Secretary, and then the chief and the Secretary make a decision and say, yes, go forward and action that item. We are happy to share with the committee the results of what we see with the Recruiting and Retention Task Force.

Senator TILLIS. Dr. Strobl, you mentioned something that I was talking with the subcommittee staff about having more information with the vast majority of your recruiting online and heavy dependence online—getting access to that data.

Some of the members of the committee not may not be aware that you all are limited as compared to recruiting in the civilian sector in terms of cookies and tracking and try to tailor the message to the specific profile of the person that is visiting one of your websites.

Have the marines or the Department—Ms. Miller, this may be a question for you—made any specific recommendations to Congress? I know it is going to take congressional action if we are going to do it.

There are some thorny issues we have to work out around data privacy but I think we need to at least take a look at it.

So either Dr. Strobl, Ms. Miller, or both, is the Department in a position to where they want to make a specific recommendation on a congressional action?

Ms. MILLER. Yes, sir. I can start and then ask Dr. Strobl to followup.

Sir, you are exactly right. We would very much like to work with the committee to potentially expand our current authorities for marketing and advertising.

As mentioned before, our current authorities are, really, almost 1990's authorities that really focus on directory information from telephone books and we do not have the same level of ability to access content that, say, the commercial sector does, and we attempt to work with our advertising agencies to try to navigate and make sure that we get some of that information. But with your support I think we can do a lot more.

And, certainly, recognize your point about protecting privacy interests. We want to safeguard that as well. But what we really want to be able to do here is to be able to provide more personalized and tailored content.

As I mentioned before, we are trying to recruit from the youth of America that has a vast range of interests and what we are really right now is a blunt force instrument, and we want to be more strategic.

We want to be able to kind of package our messaging so that it can resonate with greatest effect to a generation where we count seconds in terms of being able to capture their attention. And so we want to work with the committee to potentially expand our current authorities to do that.

Senator TILLIS. Anything to add, Dr. Strobl?

Mr. STROBL. Thank you, Senator.

I would just add I really appreciate your interest in this and would like to work with this committee and your staff to think about and study how we can better gain access to information that will help us recruit.

Our ultimate goal or maybe our second goal after maintaining and sustaining readiness and lethality is to optimize our recruiting budget so that we—when I enlisted, there were three TV channels and I got "Sports Illustrated," I think, and that was how I saw my advertising.

Now it is so fragmented it has become so much more difficult to target advertising, and if we can figure out how to leverage some of the technologies that are out there while protecting privacy I think we can get more bang for our advertising dollar.

Senator TILLIS. I think if we do it right we can address the privacy concerns. You not only are going to react—be in a position to where you can react to people who visit a potential recruiting website but you can be more proactive and identify people based on other data, just like platforms that are marketing to the population do every single second of the day.

I have got some other questions, Admiral and General Miller and General Stitt, I will be submitting for the record. Thank you for your time.

Senator GILLIBRAND. Thank you also for your time. I have one question I am going to submit for each of you to respond to and that is following up on Senator Hirono and Senator Warren's line of question.

Lieutenant General, you are right to say these are crimes and they are not tolerated. But that is not how you should see this problem because with a 1 percent conviction rate, does that mean not tolerated? I do not think so.

The message that goes to servicemembers, to potential recruits, is it is tolerated because it is not prosecuted and not prosecuted effectively.

So I would just suggest an ounce of humility because this is an area where we do not excel, and the most recent report was the worst ever—35,000 estimated cases.

And General Austin cares deeply about this issue. He impaneled experts to come up with recommendations. We are going to implement those recommendations.

This is something Senator Tillis and I worked very hard on. We are going to have independent prosecutors up and running for top 10 crimes. That is going to take a little while to get up and running.

But what I would like is a thoughtful analysis from each of you about what you can do as commanders, as policymakers, to create a culture and to create a climate where the message is received that valuing your fellow servicemember is one of the most important characteristics that is necessary for promotion, that valuing your fellow servicemembers is necessary character for you to stay in the military, and that sexual assault, sexual harassment, posting naked pictures of your fellow servicemembers, all of that behavior is something that will end your career.

It is a message that has to be sent from commanders about climate. So even though we will have expert prosecutors, hopefully, taking more cases to trial, if you do not have a climate that says we want people to be valued it is not going to work.

So Senator Tillis and I worked extremely hard on this issue. I do not expect things to get better quickly but I do expect everyone to understand we are still failing our servicemembers and we are not prosecuting enough cases. We are not getting enough cases ending in a conviction and we are not preventing enough.

We had a Government Accountability Office (GAO) report at one of our hearings last year that said this committee had put forward something like 200 different policy ideas and at least 50 that were preventative, and only a handful of the preventative measures were implemented.

That is a Commander problem for not implementing the things that Congress is asking you to do that are preventive in nature. It means we are not taking it seriously. So it is about how serious do you take the problem, do you know it is real, do you know we are not good at getting it done.

So please write an analysis of what you would like to do within your service, what you think would be helpful from Senator Tillis and I, what other policy ideas we should be thinking about.

But I would really like a thoughtful response. I do not want something defensive and I do not want something declaring victory. If I get either thing, this exercise was useless.

So I love big ideas, thoughtful ideas, and ones that Senator Tillis and I can work on for next year's personnel mark because I promise you this problem is not going away and it is a reason why especially women are not as interested in joining the armed services.

So thank you for today. Thank you for your testimony. Thank you for being so thoughtful and responsive to each of the senators.

This hearing is adjourned.

[Whereupon, at 4:52 p.m., the Committee adjourned.]

[Questions for the record with answers supplied follow:]

#### QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY SENATOR KIRSTEN GILLIBRAND

##### DATA COLLECTION

1. Senator GILLIBRAND. Dr. Strobl, the Marine Corps has endorsed a proposal to increase the categories of data that the Department of Defense are permitted to collect and retain on potential recruits. The House version of the 2023 NDAA contains such a provision that would permit the Department to compile certain information on prospective recruits. Could you share with the subcommittee the Marine Corps' views on why it is important to gain access to this information and how you will ensure that such data is used responsibly and safeguarded against both internal and external misuse?

Dr. STROBL. Our advertising program is vital to building awareness of the Marine Corps among high quality, diverse populations that are increasingly disconnected from military service. A strong advertising program enables our recruiting command to attract and recruit the highest quality accession cohorts. Advertising funds repay many times over, as they produce lower first-term attrition, higher quality marines, and increased readiness. However, an increasingly fragmented media environment and media inflation rates approaching 20 percent in many cases have made maintaining program success exceptionally difficult.

Furthermore, the military is currently restricted on the collection of personal data on applicants to only directory level information (address, telephone, email); this is a remnant of the telephone book age. We need to modernize our authorities to more closely align with those of private industry and the digital age. The information will be used to help identify prospective recruits, tailor marketing efforts, and better measure return on investment. More data enables targeted research and focused advertising, which is more effective and provides more efficient use of taxpayer dollars.

The Marine Corps is committed to the ethical use of additional online data in order to provide the most relevant information to prospects. Use of the data will require prospect acknowledgement and we are required to abide by all laws and regulations governing personal data use and storage. Only necessary and relevant applicant data will be used and it will only be retained for limited duration. All government IT systems and data stores are secured in accordance with the National Institute of Standards and Technology regulation, ensuring the highest level of security.

##### SCOPE OF RECRUITING

2. Senator GILLIBRAND. Lieutenant General Stitt, we often hear from the Army that only a small percentage of Americans have a propensity to serve in the military, and that the majority of recruits come from limited geographic regions of the country and from families with a history of military service. With an All-Volunteer Force in a competitive job market, the Army will need to expand its candidate base

to meet its goals going forward. What specific steps are the Army taking to expand both the geographic and ideological diversity of its recruiting base, and how does the Army plan to reverse the decline in propensity to serve among young Americans who are eligible for service?

Lieutenant General STITT. The Army does not officially measure propensity. Propensity research is done by the Joint Advertising, Market Research & Studies (JAMRS) program. The Army does measure brand favorability and consideration through research efforts. The Brand Tracker and Army Pulse Survey findings are used to inform Army messaging in support of one of Army Enterprise Marketing Office's main lines of effort; "Grow (the) Prospect Base." This targeted messaging increases the likelihood of growth segments converting to enlistments and enables a market expansion strategy to meet the requirements of the Army of 2030.

USAREC conducts recruiting and outreach activities focused on educating the minority population about the opportunities available in the Army to include developing partnerships with national and local organizations. Some of the organizations include: National Outreach and Sponsorships Kiwanis, Hispanic Heritage Foundation, Boys & Girls Club of America, Historical Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs), Society of Women Engineers, Hispanic Association of Colleges and Universities, League of United Latin American Citizens National Education Service Centers, 100 Black Men of America, National Association of Secondary School Principals (NASSP) Conference, National School Board Association, National Panhellenic Council ("Divine Nine") Fraternities and Sororities.

USAREC formed the Diversity Outreach and Inclusion Team (DOIT) to increase awareness of Army opportunities across race, ethnic and gender spectrums throughout the Army and to support the Army's effort to improve racial and ethnic diversity and inclusion in the military. To further reach its audiences, USAREC develops marketing products, both print and video, featuring soldiers in multiple ethnicities and both genders promoting the Army's diversity and cultural awareness and maintains Social Media efforts providing Virtual Recruiting Teams content showcasing women and minorities serving in uniform.

#### HEALTH STANDARDS

3. Ms. Miller, access to quality medical care in the United States has increased in recent s due to the passage of the Affordable Care Act and expansion of Medicaid. At the same time, standard medical treatments for common childhood conditions such as ADHD, depression, and anxiety have undergone a revolution in the last 30 years, resulting in many more children receiving beneficial treatment, including medication. Paradoxically, as the childhood population in this country is better served through increased access to care and improvements in medication and other standards of care, those same children are often deemed ineligible for military service because of the care they have received. What steps is the Department of Defense undertaking to review medical accession standards to ensure it is not screening out high-quality candidates based on outdated assumptions related to childhood conditions, behavioral health medication, and likelihood of successful military service?

Ms. MILLER. The Department continually evaluates its medical accession standards to ensure that we access individuals who are mentally and physically capable of successfully serving given the challenging conditions and requirements of military service. DODI 6130.03, Volume 1 establishes baseline accession medical standards used to either qualify or disqualify applicants for military service. The Accession & Retention Medical Standards Working Group (ARMSWG), composed of medical and personnel subject matter experts from across the Department, its Military Services, and the U.S. Coast Guard, reviews the instruction every three to 4 years and utilizes evidence-based clinical information, peer-reviewed scientific studies, scientific expert consensus, and the performance of existing standards in light of empirical data on attrition, deployment readiness, waivers, and disability rates. The ARMSWG also receives input from non-government sources and evaluates the applicability of those inputs against the military's mission and operational environment, so that the Department and the Military Services can formally coordinate updates to these standards.

Applicants who do not meet the medical accession standards prescribed in the DODI may be considered for a medical waiver. When evaluating an applicant's medical qualification as related to Mental Health/Behavioral Health, the Department does discern between clinical and non-clinical counseling, official medical diagnoses, the use of prescription medications to address the condition, particularly use of psychotropic drugs, the duration and resultant stability period, and any issues of relapse and requirements for continued treatment. Each Service, through their Service Medical Waiver Review Authorities (SMWRA) has the ability to request addi-

tional consults/test to provide more information as a means to ultimately determine the applicant's potential for a successful military career.

QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY SENATOR MAZIE K. HIRONO

SERVICE STANDARDS

4. Senator HIRONO. Dr. Strobl, gender bias and discrimination are also cited as reasons women choose not to join or leave the military. Weight standards used across the services adversely, and disproportionately impact women. We saw this in the results of an Army study the Marine Corps requested to look at the current height/weight and body composition standards. In that study, the researchers found that neither weight nor body fat was a good determination of performance. As a result of that study the Marine Corps allowed women 1 percent additional body fat and a different method for measuring body fat. Based on the results of the study, this seems arbitrary and still has a disparate impact on women. What impact, if any, do you expect these changes to have on women in the Marine Corps?

Dr. STROBL. Marine Corps human performance policies and standards are in a constant State of analysis and assessment and are modified when warranted. The goal of the recent changes, based on the TECOM-USARIEM study, is to enhance the overall health, fitness, and performance of all marines. We believe broader access to advanced body composition technology will allow marines to monitor health and fitness markers in a more refined manner. Coupled with advances in training and education in these areas, including nutrition, we expect the impact of these changes to be positive for all Marines.

Marine Corps human performance policies and standards are in a constant State of analysis and assessment and modification when warranted. The recent changes to Marine Corps body composition standards adopts the latest science for estimating body composition to include bioelectrical impedance analysis and dual energy x-ray absorptiometry. This adoption and significant investment ensures our marines are assessed using advanced human performance technology. Coupled with advances in training and education in health, fitness, and performance, including nutrition, we expect the impact of these changes to be positive for all marines.

We always seek to link health and physical performance standards to our body composition standards. Our body composition standards are age-graduated—meaning our standards allows for the effects of aging on a fit force. Additionally, marines who attain 285 on both their combat fitness test and physical fitness tests are exempt from body composition standards—which sends a clear signal that physical performance, like that you would most likely experience in combat missions, is one of our premiere measurements when assessing a marine's health and fitness. Marines who achieve 250 points on both their CFT and PFT receive an additional 1 percent body fat for their age. These parameters remain our policy; the recent study provided us additional science, along with our medical community's assessment of long-term impacts on health, which led us to provide an additional 1 percent to our standards.

We expect to propose additional recommendations in the future as we develop more data based on our use of advanced human performance technology.

MARINE CORPS' TALENT MANAGEMENT 2030 PLAN

5. Senator HIRONO. Dr. Strobl, last year General Berger personally briefed me on his Talent Management 2030 Plan outlining his vision for radically modernizing the Marine Corps' manpower system as a whole. The plan detailed how the Marine Corps would implement new models for recruiting talent and introduce new measures to increase career flexibility. Please provide an update on that plan and how it has been implemented to date.

Dr. STROBL. In Talent Management 2030 Plan, we identified four broad categories that are driving our efforts, one of which is modern digital tools, processes, and analytics. In the year since the release of the Talent Management 2030 Plan, we took steps to develop modern information technology systems, which can process advanced data analytics and create recruiting and retention models to better assist our talent management efforts.

In collaboration with the Johns Hopkins University's Applied Physics Lab we embarked on a multi-year project known as the Retention Prediction Network (RPN). It will harness vast quantities of manpower data in near-real time to not only identify a potential recruit's likelihood to join and continue to serve through their first enlistment and beyond, but also provide USMC leadership with data-informed talent management decisions.

Additionally, we are developing a better, more predictive, data-driven matching tool that will optimally align applicant interests, Primary Military Occupational Specialty (PMOS) skill requirements, and the needs of the Marine Corps.

In support of more flexible career paths, we have been decreasing Permanent Change of Station moves in lieu of Permanent Change of Assignment orders to reduce disruption to operations, personnel, and families. We have also implemented promotion opt-out to allow marines to opt out of promotion without penalty to enable them to complete other objectives or assignments of significant value to the Marine Corps. Marines also have the option through use of multiple convalescence and other paid leave authorities, which can be utilized in flexible increments, to enable parents' flexibility to care for their children.

The Fiscal Year 2022 NDAA reduced the obligated service required of career intermission program participants from 2 months of Active Service per month of intermission, to 1 month of Active Service per month of intermission. We messaged this change to the total force via Marine Administrative Message in order to further encourage participation in the program.

6. Senator HIRONO. Dr. Strobl, have you seen marked changes in the Marine Corps' recruiting and retention since the implementation of the Commandant's plan?

Dr. STROBL. It is still early in our implementation of Talent Management 2030 plan, but we intend to build the means for assessing the outcomes of our initiatives as we execute our plan. In the near term, we have shifted our mindset from being a predominately first-term enlisted force, resulting in the discharge by design of approximately 75 percent of first-term marines.

To meet Talent Management 2030 plan objectives, we will retain more Marines, giving the Marine Corps the benefit of their experience and skills; this will increase the rate of return on our investment in America's finest. To do so, we are exploring adjusting time in service and grade requirements for specific promotions and studying the structural changes and the cost implications of shifting from the recruit-and-replace model to a recruit-and-retain model. We are being proactive and streamlining our retention efforts to alert high performing marines that they are valued and we desire they remain in the Marine Corps. The Commandant's Retention Program, which kicked-off in fiscal year 2022, is one of the (non-monetary) efforts implemented to retain high performing Marines. It uses the Junior Enlisted Performance Evaluation System to identify the highest performing Marines in each job specialty and reenlisting them through a dramatically streamlined process where the Marines receive "front-of-the-line" access to monitors and assignment preference considerations for their next set of orders.

In fiscal year 2022, we met an overall increased retention mission from previous fiscal years. To accomplish this, the Commandant established programs that allowed commanders to approve some reenlistments at the unit level, and assigned our Major Subordinate Commanding Generals a retention mission. The Commandant made it clear that retention is the responsibility of our marine leaders, which resulted in an incredible effort across the Marine Corps to achieve our retention success. We also effectively used incentives—both monetary (e.g. bonuses) and non-monetary (e.g. duty station flexibility)—that targeted hard-to-fill MOSs and skills, e.g. aviators, cyber, to increase career satisfaction. Additionally, as part of our Talent Management 2030 initiative, we increased the use of technology and data, e.g. longitudinal accession, retention, and exit surveys, to better understand why individuals decide to remain a marine or leave the service. Ultimately, we made mission because when an individual becomes a marine, they want to remain a marine. The badge of honor earned through sacrifice creates a personal sense of pride, achievement, and camaraderie that marines cherish. They recognize the benefits of service in our Corps—increased education, leadership, skills, and professionalism—that set them up for success later in life.

#### MILITARY CULTURE AND CLIMATE

7. Senator HIRONO. Ms. Miller, do you believe there is a correlation between the recruiting challenges DOD is experiencing and reputational damage caused by increased reports of sexual assault and misconduct, and the overall climate in the Armed Services?

Ms. MILLER. Since 2020, slightly under one-third of 16- to 21-year-old youth have cited concerns about sexual harassment/assault as a reason not to join the Military, but this concern is not their top barrier for joining. Rather, general risks of physical and psychological harm have been, and remain, the top barriers for Service. A dis-

connected youth market, lacking a general knowledge and familiarity with service, are also factors to recruiting challenges.

8. Senator HIRONO. Ms. Miller, what actions are the Services taking to address how the military's culture, as perceived by the civilian population, is impacting recruiting and retention?

Ms. MILLER. The Department strives to develop and foster a strong and healthy culture based upon core values of honor, loyalty, service before self, and respect for others. The military of today is a diverse organization that deploys worldwide to protect and defend our national security interests. However, as the number of Americans who have served continues to shrink, we see the widening of the resultant military-civilian divide as having a significant negative impact on our ability to effectively recruit for the All-Volunteer Force (AVF). In fact, our ability to reach today's youth has never been more challenging. Consistent, broad marketing and advertising are critical to addressing the ever-widening gap between the military and civilian population, as well as building awareness and generating interest in the vast opportunities of military service. Within our authorities, we continue to leverage industry best practices to expand our outreach efforts to reach a diverse pool of youth across the Nation as well as reaching out to influencers who may help or support a young person's decision to join the military. Additionally, the Department and the Services are reengaging with community partners to further expand our reach and to change the general perceptions of the military, and recruiters are reengaging with youth through high school visits.

The Department and the Services continue to market to those who have not traditionally considered military service as a career option and reaching out to influencers who may help or support a young person's decision to join the military. Generally, it takes 6 to 10 months for marketing efforts to have a significant impact. The Department and the Service are working to find the correct balance between legacy marketing programs and new digital platforms as messages are often less impactful when spread across too many fragmented platforms. The Department and the Services recognize only a proactive, multi-faceted approach of marketing campaigns, expanded community partnerships and reconnecting through personal engagements will we be able to change the trajectory of Service recruiting outcomes.

#### RETAINING SPECIALIZED SAILORS

9. Senator HIRONO. Vice Admiral Cheeseman, it is my understanding that the Navy has struggled with recruiting and retaining the most in highly specialized fields, such as nuclear, advanced electronics, aviation and cyber. Like the other services, the Navy often turns to lucrative sign-on and retention bonuses, as well as increased monthly pay, as incentives to work in those fields. However, financial incentives aren't the only reason a member elects to start or continue their service. Historically, how effective have sign-on and retention bonuses been to meet our ongoing talent needs among officers and sailors in those career fields?

Vice Admiral CHEESEMAN. Generally, monetary incentives have proven to be effective in Navy's effort to attract and retain both officer and enlisted talent in our highly specialized fields.

For the Submarine/Nuclear Officer community, the number of new contracts signed increases by 200 percent over 6 months upon policy change and has a direct positive correlation to retention in the service. In 2017 the nuclear community increased the nuclear officer continuation bonus (COBO) by a fixed rate of \$5,000 for eligible officers. In 2020 the COBO rate increased by another \$5,000 while implementing a tiered structure at career milestones so that at each milestone the rate increased by \$5,000 through Major Command. Both implementations resulted in an increase in initial contracts signed. In 2017, a 400 percent increase in initial contracts and renegotiations occurred for the subsequent 6 months, and in 2020 a 200 percent increase in initial contracts and re-negotiations occurred through the following 6 months. Additionally, re-negotiated contracts upon a change to policy add additional time to a commitment, leading to better retention. Both new and renegotiated contracts increase retention efforts across multiple year groups.

Naval Aviation Officer Incentives (Aviation Incentive Pay (AvIP) and Aviation Bonus Pay (AvB)) are very effective and target a select group of officers at specific times throughout their careers. As the only service to implement two AvIP scales, the higher rate is only offered to due course officers who are selected for aviation milestones tours such as Department Head (DH), Commanding Officer (CO), and Major Command. Additionally, the Navy's AvB program utilizes a streamlined and agile approach by paying eight of the 15 years available by law and is offered only to DHs and COs. This program is essential to the retention of Naval Aviators and

adjusts yearly rates to ensure the targeted goals are met. While Naval Aviation saw an improvement in overall retention in fiscal year 2021, challenges still exist in certain Type/Model/Series platforms. The Navy supports targeted incentives for aviation communities with the greatest retention challenges, especially as airlines resume hiring post-COVID. The Aviation Command Retention Bonus (ACRB) underwent a complete overhaul in fiscal year 2018 increasing the value from \$36,000 to \$100,000 which resulted in a dramatically improved take rate of 58 percent. Although take rates in fiscal year 2020/fiscal year 2021 decreased, fiscal year 2022 saw a reversal in this trend with a 5-percentage point increase over fiscal year 2021. The ACRB was approved in 2021 by the Deputy Assistant Secretary of the Navy for an additional 3 years and Naval Aviation continues to evaluate effectiveness in retaining highly experienced senior aviators beyond 20 years of commissioned service.

Financial incentives have a positive impact on enlisted sailor retention. Our Selective Reenlistment Bonus (SRB) program is our largest bonus program. A Center for Naval Analysis (CNA) study found that every multiple of SRB increases the reenlistment rate by 2.5 percentage points. On average, a SRB multiple equates to approximately \$10,000 over the length of a contract. Our experience over the last few years is that SRB has been more effective than reported by CNA with every multiple increase resulting in a three to 7 percentage point increase in the reenlistment rate.

Additionally, Navy leverages tiered shipping bonuses and source rate bonuses to remain competitive with the civilian market. The higher tiers incentivize applicants to contract and ship in high quality/difficult to recruit ratings. Navy's preliminary analysis on enlistment bonuses shows that increasing these bonuses have had a significant impact on placement of applicants into desired high quality rates.

10. Senator HIRONO. Vice Admiral Cheeseman, if they aren't helping, what reasons do those personnel cite for leaving the service?

Vice Admiral CHEESEMAN. The Navy collects data on the reasons for servicemembers leaving the Navy using two different survey tools: one is an exit survey while the other is a 'Health of the Force' questionnaire. The exit survey collects data from departing sailors asking them what most influenced them to leave the naval service. Over the last 6 years the top five reasons cited for leaving the Navy are:

1. Impact on Family
2. Civilian Job Opportunities
3. Work-Life Balance
4. Career Assignments
5. Leadership

The 'Health of Force' survey is conducted annually through employee engagement and also asks questions about a servicemembers' intentions to stay in the Navy. In 2022, (and in line with previous years), work-life balance remains among the most frequently cited influences to leave the Navy. When broken out by officer and enlisted, officers are more likely to cite geographic instability as a reason to leave while enlisted participants are more likely to cite salary/pay.

11. Senator HIRONO. Vice Admiral Cheeseman, how do the Navy's recruiting and retention numbers align with manning the current fleet, as well as the fleet of the near future?

Vice Admiral CHEESEMAN. Navy's recruiting and retention goals are key to optimizing current and future fleet manning and minimizing gaps at sea. Recruiting targets are developed with priority placement on fleet ratings of concern, to ensure sufficient total rating inventory is available to be distributed to the fleet. The majority of sailors coming from the student pipeline will be going to fill gapped sea billets or backfill sailors scheduled to rotate from sea to shore assignments.

Navy retention targets, policies, and incentives focus on increased opportunities to ensure every retention-eligible sailor who wants to stay, has the opportunity to stay, to include those sailors who want to go to sea and possess critical skills we need to keep the fleet operating.

While Navy meets Active component accessions and retention goals, recruiting and retention attainment alone will not fill all gapped billet requirements which occur across all paygrades. Many of these gaps are a result of billet/paygrade misalignment and distribution friction associated with personnel in a non-distributable status (limited duty, in training pipelines, etc.), and force structure changes that occur throughout the fiscal year. To mitigate these challenges, optimize our work-

force, and address current and future shortfalls, Navy is maximizing our talent and preserving flexibility and sailor choice by transforming the Navy enlisted advancement and distribution systems into a market-driven, billet-based talent management system. Specifically:

- *Supply Chain Efficiencies.* We've increased enlistment bonuses for new accessions to combat a challenging recruiting environment and we've streamlined our training pipelines to deliver a greater percentage of our recruits to sea duty faster.
- *Retention Incentives.* We expanded the Selective Reenlistment Bonus (SRB) program targeting retention in critical skills and paygrades as required and curtailed early outs and offered extension opportunities for separating and retiring sailors.
- *Increasing Sea Duty Incentives.*
  - o In addition to Navy's traditional sea duty incentive pays, we've implemented the Detailing Marketplace Assignment Policy (DMAP) to better align sea duty tour lengths with the billet base and available sailors. DMAP provides sailors completing their initial sea duty tour with a financial incentive and advancement into a billet requiring more responsibility if they choose to remain on sea duty for an additional tour.
  - o Navy has increased our use of High Year Tenure (HYT) waivers to retain sailors who would otherwise be forced to separate if they choose to accept a sea duty assignment.
  - o Navy has expanded our Advance to Position (A2P) opportunities across the force focused on filling high priority and/or sea intensive billets. In addition to A2P at the E5 and E6 ranks, this now includes Senior Enlisted Advance to Position (SEA2P) which recently convened to fill critical E8 and E9 billets.
  - o Navy is also utilizing our senior enlisted assignment optimization process to manually correct misalignments by taking sailor and Navy needs into account to reassign E7-E9 sailors to billets commensurate with their rank. This will ensure our most experienced sailors are aligned to billets which need their training, leadership and experience based on real-time fleet priorities. We recently aligned E8/E9 sailors in July and we'll execute E7 Assignment Optimization in October. Optimization of our Senior Enlisted Sailors is a bridging process as Navy continues to build and will soon announce our Senior Enlisted Marketplace, beginning with E9 in fiscal year 2023 and driving toward billet based advancements for all E7 and above.
- *Sea Duty Extensions.* When necessary, Navy continues to take an aggressive posture of extending sailors at sea (up to 6 months) and curtailing shore duty early (up to 6 months) as necessary to ensure critical billets are covered.

Officer recruitment and retention has seen similar challenges in some key specialty warfighting communities. In recent years, the Submarine/Nuclear Officer Community's recruiting and retention has fallen short of the Submarine Force goals. This results in longer sea tours for officers which ultimately leads to retention concerns. Currently, there are no trepidations about the ability to man the fleet, but there are concerns about officer tour lengths should recruitment and retention numbers remain below goals.

Naval Aviation Officer Community saw an improvement in overall retention in fiscal year 2021 but challenges still persist for certain Type/Model/Series (T/M/S). Aviation Department Head (DH) Selection Board declination rates remained above the historical average. The strike fighter (VFA) community continues to experience 25 percent gapped DH pilot billets. Despite the improvement in retention, Naval Aviation saw a drop in DH bonus take rates. The Navy supports targeted incentives for communities with the greatest retention challenges, especially as airlines resume hiring post-COVID. Naval Aviation continues to meet operational requirements, but long-term health of some communities remains challenged by current retention behavior.

#### US ARMY'S EFFORTS TO RECRUIT

12. Senator HIRONO. Lieutenant General Stitt, the CDC estimates 71 percent of young Americans are unfit for Military Service. Major reasons for disqualification include obesity, education deficits, criminal records and prior drug use. Has the implementation of the Army's ten short-term recruiting initiatives introduced by Secretary Wormuth eased the pressure?

Lieutenant General STITT. The Army continues, as it has for decades, to evaluate each applicant utilizing the "whole-person" concept. Of the ten short-term recruiting initiatives introduced, the Army is focusing on those that directly support marketing and recruitment processing. In direct support of recruitment efforts, the Assistant

Secretary of the Army for Manpower & Reserve Affairs signed a policy (Academic Skills Development Program) on July 22, 2022 to allow CAT IV & CAT I-IIIB (“opt-in”) to attend a no greater than 90-day program to elevate their Test Score Category (TSC) by taking the Armed Forces Classification Test (in-service ASVAB). The program is a direct support function of the Future Soldier Prep Course (FSPC), via a proof-of-concept endeavor w/volunteers currently in the training base, has seen greater than 75 percent success in those Soldiers increasing their TSC and in the fitness track, 73 percent were moving to basic training. The Army remains committed to investing in America’s youth with programs like this one.

13. Senator HIRONO. Lieutenant General Stitt, are the short-term goals of reduced standards and offering cash incentives working as expected?

Lieutenant General STITT. The Army has not reduced standards. The Army remains fiercely committed to maintaining standards of excellence and recruiting quality over quantity as it has for the past decade. The Army’s enlistment incentive program saw sizable returns by offering fully qualified applicants a monetary incentive to ship within 30 days to Basic Combat Training (BCT). However, the Army determined that applicants were more motivated to join when given a choice for their first duty station upon completion of training. Based on this feedback from new recruits, the Army is working to ensure that the maximum number of locations are available to an applicant.

14. Senator HIRONO. Lieutenant General Stitt, are the new physical fitness and testing pilot programs having an impact on recruiting goals?

Lieutenant General STITT. There are no indications the new Army Combat Fitness Test (ACFT) has impacted recruiting. Future Soldiers are primarily focused on the Occupational Physical Assessment Test (OPAT), which determines the Future Soldiers’ Military Occupational Specialty and are not required to take the ACFT when they contract.

#### IMPACT OF MHS GENESIS

15. Senator HIRONO. Ms. Miller, one issue affecting the Services’ ability to recruit qualified applicants is the roll-out of MHS Genesis, a new electronic health record system that was launched earlier this year. While designed to make it easier to see the entirety of a recruit’s medical history, the Services are concerned that MHS Genesis has increased “contact to contract” time. The Services note that this processing backlog is caused by incomplete electronic health information, an increase in applicant disqualification, and an increase in total processing time. Recruiters have also pointed to a shortage of doctors and personnel as contributing factors. Are you considering any changes to MHS Genesis to address the concerns that recruiters have raised?

Ms. MILLER. Whereas the initial roll-out of the congressionally mandated use of MHS Genesis caused some disruption to the recruiting environment, USMEPCOM continues ongoing communication and partnership with Services to mitigate challenges and barriers to the recruiting mission and support policy initiatives/pilots to reduce the contact to contract timeline.

USMEPCOM and Defense Health Agency (DHA) conduct weekly coordination to research and develop system change requests that are more suitable and better support the USMEPCOM and Recruiting Services’ mission. The most significant effort of this focused partnership is the initiative to open the domain aperture of medical information. This is a MHS Genesis enterprise system change which requires a significant investment by DHA. Opening this aperture will allow a lookback in applicant medical history from 6 months to 3 years—allowing USMEPCOM Medical Officers to see a more complete picture of the applicant’s health history, thus allowing for a more informed qualification decision.

As part of our ongoing efforts to streamline and refine our use of MHS Genesis, we have implemented a Medical Accession Records Pilot that evaluates the feasibility of reducing the time limitations for 38 disqualifying medical conditions from ‘any history of’ to various timeframes. Additionally, we have authorized the Services to conduct a Conditional Delayed Entry Program that allows applicants with specified disqualifying medical conditions to contract in a conditional DEP status while awaiting adjudication of Service waiver decision, thereby reducing the ‘contact to contract’ rates. Moreover, USMEPCOM has created a virtual medical prescreen cell that allows MEPCOM medical professionals from across the country to utilize MHS Genesis remotely to review medical records as a means to increase capacity and through-put.

16. Senator HIRONO. Ms. Miller, would you consider pausing HMS Genesis until it is fully funded and studied?

Ms. MILLER. At this time, no. USMEPCOM was one of 23 waves scheduled in a congressionally mandated multi-year strategy to deploy MHS Genesis across DOD. USMEPCOM was included in the Defense Health Agency (DHA) wave timeline established in 2019 for a 2022 deployment.

The decision to deploy MHS Genesis in fiscal year 2022 was based on several factors centering on the availability of authoritative health information to improve qualification decisions as early as possible. Prior service medical conditions to include concealed medical history accounts for approximately 46 percent of all “Existed Prior to Service” discharges at initial entry training, at great cost to the Services and the taxpayer.

There is no ideal time to shift from self-disclosure to validation through Health Information Exchanges (HIEs). MHS Genesis is contractually scheduled to be completed in 2024. While the current recruiting environment is notably challenging, there is no guarantee that pausing MHS Genesis will result in different outcomes as the recruiting environment may not be markedly different in 2024. The Department has a statutory responsibility to ensure individuals entering the Armed Forces are able bodied.

#### COST OF LIVING ALLOWANCES (COLA)

17. Senator HIRONO. Ms. Miller, Cost of Living Allowances (COLA) is an important retention tool to ensure that servicemembers and their families can cover their expenses while stationed in places like Hawaii, which have higher-than-average prices for goods and services. Understandably, servicemembers and families stationed in Hawaii were alarmed to learn this month that the DOD was planning to reduce COLA rates for Hawaii. With inflation running near its highest levels since the early 1980s, it seems counterintuitive that COLA should be reduced by 10 points for Hawaii Island, Kauai, and Oahu and by 8 points for Maui. Why did recent DOD calculations result in a proposed reduction in COLA for servicemembers in Hawaii?

Ms. MILLER. First, given that inflation is increasing more in the continental United States than in Hawaii, the relative purchasing power between servicemembers stationed in CONUS and those stationed overseas, to include Hawaii, is narrowing. In other words, the fact that it is more costly to live outside of CONUS is not as true as it once was. That said, no decision has been made to reduce COLA in Hawaii. The Department authorized U.S. INDO-PACOM to conduct an out-of-cycle Living Pattern Survey (LPS) and Retail Price Schedule (RPS) survey to obtain more current data, and we are in the process of determining the best time to conduct these assessments. COLA rates could possibly change (either up or down), or remain unchanged, based on analysis of data from these new surveys; however, it is too early to know.

The Overseas Cost-of-Living Allowance (COLA) is a non-taxable allowance designed to supplement servicemembers pay when assigned to a permanent duty station (PDS) outside the continental U.S. (OCONUS) (i.e., foreign countries, U.S. territories, Alaska, and Hawaii) to ensure they maintain an equivalent level of purchasing power as their CONUS counterparts. Many factors affect the computation of Overseas COLA rates, including the costs/prices of non-housing goods and services in both CONUS and at overseas locations, the shopping patterns of servicemembers and their families (including where they shop and how much they shop on base, off-base, or online), as well as changes in the relative importance of some goods and services over others (their weights).

18. Senator HIRONO. Ms. Miller, when is a final decision expected on any adjustments to COLA for Hawaii?

Ms. MILLER. No decision has been made to reduce COLA in Hawaii. The Department authorized U.S. INDO-PACOM to conduct an out-of-cycle Living Pattern Survey and Retail Price Schedule survey to obtain more current data, and we are in the process in determining the best time to conduct these assessments. Once these surveys are complete and the data has been analyzed, we will make a final decision at that time.

## QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY SENATOR ELIZABETH WARREN

## PRIVATIZED MILITARY HOUSING

19. Senator WARREN. Ms. Miller, Lieutenant General Stitt, Vice Admiral Cheeseman, Lieutenant General Miller, Dr. Strobl, we continue to hear concerns about completely inadequate military housing. A recent Military Housing Privatization Initiative housing survey done by Armed Forces Housing Advocates of 1,000 residents in two days shows that 50 percent of respondents would not re-enlist in the military if they must continue to reside in MHPI projects due to ongoing systemic issues with the homes. With the current housing crisis occurring across the nation, that relegates it essentially necessary for military families to reside in MHPI homes, what is your plan to make joining and re-enlisting in the military an attractive job prospect for families that experience substandard living conditions, particularly in high-cost areas of living?

Ms. MILLER. The Department continues to take actions to resolve this issue. We believe that no servicemember, or their families should ever have to live in substandard housing. While we agree this must be resolved, it is important to note this situation is not pervasive across all military housing. With regard to recruiting and retention, we believe positive messages regarding the vast opportunities and benefits that come with military service need to be further highlighted to offset the constant negative messages.

Lieutenant General STITT.

- The Army is working together with privatized housing landlords to ensure safe, high-quality, affordable housing is provided where servicemembers and military families want—and choose—to live. This includes providing increased opportunities for tenant engagement and ensuring that tenant concerns are addressed in a timely, transparent and responsible manner.
- Privatized housing companies whose tenant satisfaction falls below average on the annual Tenant Satisfaction Survey must create action plans to correct deficiencies and identify items that are most important to residents. The action plans, which must be approved by the Army, are monitored by installation leadership and the Commanding General, Installation Management Command (IMCOM).
- Privatized housing companies are investing over \$3 billion in calendar year 2021 to 2026, into privatized family housing on Army installations. In addition, the Army will invest over \$1.5 billion from fiscal year 2023 to 2027 to improve and construct Army-owned housing and an average \$1 billion per year, fiscal year 2021 to 2030, to renovate/modernize existing barracks and construct new barracks.
- Soldiers and families are encouraged to use existing and improved reporting systems to request maintenance for their quarters. Additionally, soldiers and families are encouraged to bring any housing issue to the installation Military Housing Office (staffed by government personnel), their installation leadership, and the soldier's chain of command. Installation leadership continues to conduct town halls for residents to ensure lines of communication remain open.

Vice Admiral CHEESEMAN. We understand the burdens that unsatisfactory housing conditions place on our servicemembers and their families. Certainly, such conditions may factor into sailors' reenlistment considerations and is exactly why the Department of the Navy (DON) remains focused on MHPI program oversight and accountability and our continued commitment to providing servicemembers and their families with safe, quality housing. To achieve this goal the DON has taken numerous steps to hold our MHPI partners accountable including:

- Reinforcing installation commander responsibility for day-to-day oversight of housing quality and services provided by the MHPI project companies;
- Hiring an additional approximately 290 government housing personnel to augment housing oversight, quality assurance, and customer care services, and establishing housing councils and resident advocates;
- Renegotiating performance incentive fee criteria with the MHPI companies to better measure MHPI partners' performance;
- Requiring MHPI projects to implement electronic work order systems that are visible by tenants and government housing staff;
- Implementing the uniform DOD housing standard requiring installations to inspect and approve housing units at each change of occupancy, in addition to other required housing inspections;
- Improving training for commanders and housing staff.

Apart from a small number of key and essential personnel, servicemembers are not required to reside in privatized housing and the DON is committed to leaving it as a choice for military personnel on whether they reside in MHPI housing.

Lieutenant General MILLER. Servicemember Housing is very important to the DAF both for families living in MHPI projects and the approximately 80 percent of servicemembers who live in local communities. CEL & Associates, Inc., a nationally recognized survey company, conducted the annual Tenant Satisfaction Survey of all MHPI tenants from October 2021 through December 2021, and found 77.7 percent of tenants are satisfied with their housing. While the satisfaction score and the high occupancy rate in MHPI projects (greater than 95 percent for more than the past 2 years) indicates most MHPI tenants are satisfied with privatized housing, we have taken the following actions to ensure we are providing safe, quality homes where airmen and guardians choose to live among their various housing options:

- Hired 60 Resident Advocates to aid members to resolve issues or concerns.
- Added 147 positions to Military Housing Office (MHO) responsible for increased inspections and oversight at the installation level.
- Initiated five lines of effort to Empower Residents; Integrate Leadership; Improve Communication; Improve Oversight and Standardize Policy resulting in the identification and implementation of 51 action items. To date, 49 of the 51 action items have been completed.
- Implemented a 1-800 24/7 Air Force Housing Call Center, which MHPI tenants can call and have their concern addressed by the DAF Housing Program Executive Office.
- Implemented Resident Councils at each installation, with volunteer members of the MHPI communities across all rank bands and a direct line to the Installation Commander.
- Developed and deployed templates, guidance, and training for MHO personnel to use for move-in, move-out, and change of occupancy maintenance inspections and work order validation.
- Working with MHPI project owners, OSD, and OMB to financially restructure projects for modernization to keep homes marketable.
- In accordance with NDAA Section 3051, conducting independent home inspections. As of 30 Sep 22, over 4,200 units at 7 installations inspected and preliminary results found units to be structurally sound and habitable.
- Implementing revised NDAA Section 3036 provision to redirect 2.5 percent of monthly payments to underfunded projects, redirecting resources for life, health, safety concerns or to enhance quality of life.

Dr. STROBL. It is DOD policy to “rely on the private sector as the primary source of housing for accompanied and unaccompanied personnel normally eligible to draw a housing allowance.” This has historically resulted in approximately 25 percent of military personnel residing in government-owned housing or choosing to reside in privatized housing.

Under the Military Housing Privatization Initiative (MHPI), Military Departments partner with the public-private sector to own, operate and maintain housing facilities on DOD installations in a manner comparable to off-base private sector housing. Under the MHPI, the Department of the Navy (DON) has privatized nearly all on-base family housing in the U.S. During the initial development period, the private sector MHPI companies have constructed or renovated 16,796 Marine Corps family housing units out of the original planned end-State of 23,153, or approximately 73 percent of the overall Marine Corps MHPI family housing inventory. Apart from a small number of key and essential personnel, servicemembers are not required to reside in privatized housing and the Marine Corps is committed to leaving it as a choice for military personnel on whether they reside in MHPI housing.

The Marine Corps provides oversight of the MHPI projects that operate on its installations, reporting to the DON. To ensure the quality of MHPI housing, the Marine Corps has increased its Government housing staff to ensure that Government personnel are available to advocate for the housing concerns of military tenants and to provide day-to-day oversight to ensure the MHPI projects provide quality housing and customer service consistent with project legal agreements. Marine Corps Military Housing Offices (MHOs) assess homes during changes of occupancy and followup with tenants within 15 and 30 days after they move in. Additionally, condition assessments are conducted on an annual basis and the Marine Corps MHOs track systemic issues until resolution. Finally, the MHPI partner’s annual and 5-year recapitalization plans are reviewed at the installation, region and Marine Corps headquarters level prior to approval, with the objective of prioritizing life, health, and safety issues and ensuring project sustainment and recapitalization as needed to guarantee quality housing for servicemembers and their families.

The Marine Corps will continue to remain diligent in overseeing our MHPI partners to ensure that they deliver quality housing and a positive living experience in keeping with our commitment to attracting and retaining our greatest asset, marines and sailors.

20. Senator WARREN. Ms. Miller, Lieutenant General Stitt, Vice Admiral Cheeseman, Lieutenant General Miller, Dr. Strobl, the physical and emotional trauma that is caused to our servicemembers and their families while residing in substandard living conditions is not only heart-wrenching but costs our taxpayers thousands of dollars every month via ongoing healthcare expenses from exposure to environmental toxins, window falls, and more. This also affects military retention and frankly, operational readiness. What steps have you taken to hold these companies and their employees accountable since fiscal year 2020?

Ms. MILLER. We have taken numerous actions since fiscal year 2020 to hold MHPI project companies accountable and to improve the housing opportunities for servicemembers who choose to live in privatized housing. Some of those actions included:

- Withheld performance incentive fees at sites with data anomalies based upon independent 3rd party audits on maintenance data systems.
- Placed two project owners on performance improvement plans for systemic performance issues.
- Renegotiated Performance Incentive Fees strengthening our ability to address poor performance and responsiveness to residents' and Commanders'.
- Worked with POs to establish an independent third-party work order survey system for feedback collection from residents regarding response, completion, and customer service of maintenance actions.
- Standardized the annual Tenant Satisfaction Survey and changed the deployment process to one coordinated by DAF to ensure tenants' responses are not unduly influenced by the project companies; results can be trusted as an accurate measure of tenant satisfaction.
- Revamped our annual site visit process placing additional emphasis on the resident experience.
- Implemented Portfolio Assessment Program with emphasis on operational performance allowing senior DAF leadership focus on underperforming projects and community action plan implementation to drive improvements.
- Negotiated with MHPI project owners (9/10) for adoption of the 18 rights in the Tenant Bill of Rights as required by the Fiscal Year 2020 NDAA; implementation underway as State lease addendums are submitted, reviewed and approved by DAF.
- Worked closely with the Department of Justice in their investigations of MHPI project companies including findings of fraud and estimations for restitution payments.

Lieutenant General STITT.

- The Army has fully implemented the Military Housing Privatization Initiative Tenant Bill of Rights at all of its installations with privatized housing.
- The Army established new incentive-fee metrics to hold housing privatization companies accountable for maintenance and customer service. Customer satisfaction—which is determined by factors such as work-order-completion data and tenant-survey scores—accounts for 30 percent of the award. Privatized housing project companies with scores of 69 percent or lower are ineligible for incentive-fee awards.
- When necessary, the Army has issued formal letters of concern to companies for issues and increased oversight until the issues are resolved.
- The Army has implemented an Environmental Hazard Response Registry for housing.
- The Army has implemented 100 percent “change of occupancy” inspections and 100 percent assurance checks on life, health and safety work orders.
- The Army has hired independent third-party experts to perform comprehensive financial and development reviews
- The Army has established Habitability and Displaced Residents Policies; the IMCOM Commanding General conducts weekly, by name, reviews of displaced residents and works closely with privatized housing companies to get families back in home expeditiously

Vice Admiral CHEESEMAN. The Department of the Navy (DON) remains focused on making continuous improvements in MHPI program oversight and partner accountability in furtherance of our commitment to safe, quality housing for servicemembers and their families. To achieve this goal, the DON has taken numerous steps to increase MHPI partner accountability, including, but not limited to:

- Navy Facilities Engineering Systems Command (NAVFAC) coordinated the semi-annual update to our MHPI handbook, which includes detailed information for Military Housing Offices (MHOs) on overseeing maintenance operations as well as sections on Guidance for Change of Occupancy Maintenance Inspections, the Dispute Resolution Process, the Tenant Bill of Rights, and the Plain Language Briefs.
  - The DON has reinforced Installation Commander responsibility for day-to-day oversight of housing quality and services provided by the MHPI project companies.
  - The DON hired approximately 290 additional government housing personnel to augment housing oversight, introduce quality assurance functions, and expand customer care services. This has allowed the DON to perform broader and deeper monitoring of day-to-day MHPI project operations. With these additional resources, NAVFAC stood up a new Quality Assurance Program and designated positions to focus on oversight of MHPI maintenance operations, while Commander, Navy Installations Command (CNIC) devoted 68 of its 147 new positions to inspecting homes.
  - NAVFAC negotiated updated performance incentive fee criteria with the MHPI companies that more effectively and, with more granularity, measure MHPI partners' performance from the perspective of the resident experience and the DON's expectations. The new criteria place less emphasis on straight mathematical calculations in favor of detailed analysis and a greater degree of DON discretion, including:
    - Expanding the resident satisfaction criterion to consider move-in and work order survey results in addition to results from the annual tenant satisfaction survey;
    - Elevating the importance of and broadening the scope of maintenance management, including Change of Occupancy Maintenance and work order management;
    - Measuring completion of preventive maintenance activities and execution of capital repair and replacement projects;
    - Increasing the total DON discretionary portion in the areas of greatest concern to residents: resident satisfaction, project safety, and maintenance performance.
  - NAVFAC has improved the processes governing DON validation of incentive fee requests, which include demanding better and more accurate partner submissions, eliciting feedback from a wide range of DON participants in the MHPI enterprise, and performing thorough internal review and validation of partner data.
  - DON staff at all echelons interact regularly with MHPI partners in formal and informal settings to prevent problems from arising wherever possible and to monitor MHPI partner problem resolution.
  - The DON has required projects to implement electronic work order systems that are visible by tenants and allow DON housing staff real-time oversight of maintenance activities.
  - The DON has implemented the uniform DOD housing standard requiring installations to inspect and approve housing units at each change of occupancy, in addition to other required housing inspections. DON personnel conduct those inspections.
  - The DON has improved training for Commanders and housing staff to enable them to more effectively oversee MHPI partner performance at the installation level and to act more quickly to address performance deficiencies.
  - The DON fully implemented the Tenant Bill of Rights as issued by DOD in fiscal year 2021 at all our installations with privatized housing.
  - NAVFAC has invoked contractual remedies where performance has been inadequate, such as issuing notices of dissatisfaction to MHPI property managers. Lieutenant General MILLER. USD(P&R) defers to USD(A&S) for these responses.
- Dr. STROBL. Leadership Engagement: Since fiscal year 2020, Marine Corps leadership has played a more active role in overseeing the management of the Military Housing Privatization Initiative (MHPI) companies that own and operate MHPI housing projects on Marine Corps installations, increasing leadership engagement in project oversight. Leadership at all levels meet with Marine Corps MHPI partners regularly to discuss tenant concerns, review housing budgets, and property conditions. In addition, the Marine Corps has reinforced installation commander responsibility for day-to-day oversight of housing quality and service provided by the MHPI projects.
- Third Party Inspections: In accordance with Section 3051 of the Fiscal Year 2020 NDAA, the Marine Corps has launched the first phase of its independent, third-

party inspections to receive unbiased feedback on the condition of our MHPI housing units. These inspections are performed in accordance with DOD's newly established uniform housing standard, as required by Section 3051 of the Fiscal Year 2020 NDAA. Any identified life, health or safety issues are passed on immediately to the MHPI partner to address.

**Restructured Incentive Fees:** Consistent with DOD policy issued in fiscal year 2020, the property management incentive fee structure for all Department of the Navy (DON) MHPI projects has been revised, putting greater emphasis on tenant satisfaction (40 percent), maintenance management (35 percent), project safety (15 percent), and financial management (10 percent). These changes ensure that MHPI partners are addressing tenant concerns, properly maintaining the privatized housing facilities, ensuring the safety of the homes, and expending finances appropriately to guarantee adequate housing for marines and sailors today and over the long-term life of the projects. When warranted, the Marine Corps will withhold project incentive fees or work with DON to place the MHPI company on a performance improvement plan.

**Tenant Bill of Rights, Including Dispute Resolution:** The Marine Corps has fully implemented the MHPI Tenant Bill of Rights issued by DOD in fiscal year 2021 at all installations with privatized housing. Our installation Military Housing Offices (MHOs) continue to educate and inform servicemembers and their families who live in MHPI housing about rights as MHPI tenants, to include the dispute resolution process that is one of the 18 MHPI tenant rights. This formal Dispute Resolution Process requires an independent assessment of a tenant's complaint, with full resolution within 30 days (60 days if an extension is granted).

**Audits/Quality Control Reviews:** In accordance with 2019 DOD guidance, the DON reviewed its entire MHPI portfolio to identify potential inappropriate business practices and implemented reforms to enhance DON monitoring and auditing of MHPI projects to detect and deter violations of U.S. antifraud law by MHPI companies or their employees, and to inform decisions regarding project incentive fee payments and the need to take corrective measures to address MHPI company/project performance. Additionally, since fiscal year 2020, several DOD OIG and GAO audits have been initiated to assess that the DOD MHPI project oversight and implementation of MHPI reforms have been properly completed.

21. Senator WARREN. Ms. Miller, my office has received reports that some private military housing companies do not allow spouses to be listed as tenants. Does the Department of Defense know how many companies and installations have this policy?

Ms. MILLER. USD(P&R) defers to USD(A&S) for these responses.

22. Senator WARREN. Ms. Miller, does the Department of Defense know how many companies and installations will not honor a maintenance request if it is not filed by someone listed as a tenant on the lease?

Ms. MILLER. USD(P&R) defers to USD(A&S) for these responses.

23. Senator WARREN. Ms. Miller, my office has also received reports that the consequence of not listing spouses on the leases for privatized military housing in domestic violence situations leaves that spouse vulnerable to retaliation and homelessness. When the servicemember, as the lease holder, is no longer welcome in the home their spouse is then kicked out. In one case this may have led to a spouse withdrawing a protective order that may have saved her life. Does the Department of Defense have any policies in place to support those spouses or allow for a compassionate transition?

Ms. MILLER. The Family Advocacy Program (FAP) supports victims with victim advocacy services. Victim advocacy services are available 24/7 and can help a victim to find safe temporary civilian housing, if available, when their home is no longer safe. Under certain circumstances, the Installation/Garrison Commander may authorize FAP funds to secure safe housing for a victim of child abuse and neglect or domestic abuse when all other resources have been exhausted.

Transitional Compensation for Abused Dependents (TCAD) can also be a resource for victims of abuse and can be accessed through FAP victim advocacy services once the servicemember sponsor has been separated from military service due to child abuse and neglect and/or domestic abuse. TCAD can provide temporary relief to families by providing monetary compensation, access to supportive services such as counseling and advocacy, and TRICARE medical benefits, up to 36 months from application date.

Due to child abuse or domestic abuse, a family who is stationed outside of the continental United States may find that they need to return to the United States

while the servicemember remains overseas. This can be authorized as an early return of dependents (ERD) under the Joint Travel Regulations (JTR). Per the JTR, table 5–22 2.b.d., a dependent may return early from OCONUS locations when there are compelling personal reasons. This includes, but not limited to, marital difficulties, unforeseen family problems, reasons of a humanitarian or compassionate nature, or other situations such as inadequate housing, which adversely effects the servicemember's performance of duty.

#### MEDICAL DISQUALIFICATION IMPACTS ON RECRUITING

24. Senator WARREN. Lieutenant General Stitt, Vice Admiral Cheeseman, Lieutenant General Miller, Dr. Strobl, in their most recent annual report, the Accession Medical Standards Analysis and Research Activity noted that between fiscal year 2016 and fiscal year 2020, 13 percent to 16 percent of all applicants were initially medically disqualified during the accessions process. Of those applicants, up to 20 percent were disqualified because of a "Learning, Psychiatric, and Behavioral Disorder." What efforts have the Services, in coordination with the Office of the Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness (USD(P&R)), taken to evaluate the surveillance trends seen in medical disqualifications and consider them in potential revisions to the DOD-wide or Service-specific medical qualifications for accession into the military?

Lieutenant General STITT. From the perspective of Americans being physically/medically unfit for service, the Army, in very close coordination with OSD, is piloting the Conditional Delayed Entry Program (DEP). The intent of the pilot is to reduce delays between the Military Entrance Processing Station (MEPS) Medical Exam and contracting due to service medical waiver requirements for applicants affected by certain disqualifying conditions. This pilot is designed to improve the Army's contact to contract time for candidates whose disqualifying condition(s) is/are, in most cases, determined to be waivable based on an agreed upon set of conditions between U.S. Army Recruiting Command (USAREC) and U.S. Military Entrance Processing Command (USMEPCOM). The pilot allows applicants to contract and enter DEP while awaiting waiver decisions. In addition, and from a more macrolevel, all services are working with OSD to help bolster the efforts with the Medical Accession Records Pilot (MARP) created to evaluate the feasibility of reducing the time limitations on 38 disqualifying medical conditions by utilizing verifiable medical information available in Military Health System (MHS) GENESIS, the Department's electronic medical system of record.

Vice Admiral CHEESEMAN. The Navy Recruiting Command medical waivers team participates in the monthly DOD Accessions Medical Standards Working Group (AMSWG) where data on any specific waiver trends across the services is presented by the DOD Accessions Medical Standards Research Activity (AMSARA). From the information presented, revisions to the Accessions and Retention standards are considered. Surveillance trends in entry level separations from recruit training are also analyzed from time to time. All available information is taken into account when considering recommendations for DOD policy revisions.

Lieutenant General MILLER. USD (P&R) is piloting a program to evaluate the feasibility of reducing the time limitations on 38 disqualifying medical conditions with an historically high waiver approval rate, by utilizing verifiable medical information available in Military Health System (MHS) Genesis, the Department's electronic medical system of record.

Additionally, the Accession and Retention Medical Standards Working Group recently completed the 2021 review of the current DODI and proposed changes to the timelines for medical approval, gender-specific verbiage and a host of other positive changes, based on empirical data and evidence as well as operational requirements and current population health trends.

Dr. STROBL. Department of Defense Instruction 6130.03 sets the medical enlistment standards for the Department and we defer to Navy's Bureau of Medicine (BUMED) for policy establishment and revision. However, if the applicant is medically disqualified at an entrance processing station, we have the opportunity to submit a medical waiver to BUMED for a review and recommendation. The service typically approves favorable BUMED recommendations. This process provides service data for analysis and future revisions of Department policy.

25. Senator WARREN. Ms. Miller, Lieutenant General Stitt, Vice Admiral Cheeseman, Lieutenant General Miller, Dr. Strobl, the Military Entrance Processing Command (MEPSCOM) is beginning their roll-out of MHS Genesis, the new electronic health record that DOD anticipates completing the full deployment in 2023. Task and Purpose recently reported that MHS Genesis is delaying or further delay-

ing the accession medical evaluation and processing of medical waivers. Are you aware of such delays and how are you working with the Defense Health Agency and the Federal Electronic Health Record Modernization (FEHRM) program office to mitigate these process barriers?

Ms. MILLER. With the deployment of MHS Genesis and increased access to authoritative medical history of applicants (as opposed to relying solely on applicant self-disclosure), we experienced, as expected, an increase in the number of potentially disqualifying conditions identified in applicants (30 percent pre-MHS-G to 58 percent post-MHS-G). This in turn increased the number of applicants medically disqualified by one-third (20 percent to 29 percent). The influx of increased waiver requests for these disqualifying conditions has slowed waiver processing by the service waiver authorities as they adjust to the higher demand. The specific delay in waiver processing is unique to each service.

Lieutenant General STITT. On March 10, 2022, USMEPCOM launched MHS GENESIS to the remaining MEPS and two Remote Processing Stations (RPS)—having all 67 processing stations live with MHS GENESIS. As before, USMEPCOM and DHA provided onsite support during the first 7 days of the full deployment to afford over-the-shoulder training/support to MEPS personnel.

As anticipated (based on MHSG implementation at Medical Treatment Facilities (MTFs)), USMEPCOM experienced a slight decrease in operational capacity for the first 30 days as users learned the system and adapted to a historically high level of throughput. USMEPCOM has since returned to previous efficiency levels with medical exams and maximum prescreen processing times actually reduced from 30 to 10 days.

After 5 months of operations with MHSG, we conclude the system is working generally as expected; however, gaps in information available through the Health Information Exchange (HIE) tool has emerged as the key challenge for both USMEPCOM and recruiting partners.

Although DHA connects with approximately 65 percent of hospital networks, they do not control the quality and quantity of health data shared through those networks, resulting in inconsistent health history and/or incomplete record sharing.

USMEPCOM is able to make a qualification decision based on the records in HIE on approximately 71 percent of applicants, resulting in approximately 29 percent of applicants who are asked to provide supplemental paper records. However, the overall raw number of applicants who are required to collect documents is lower post-MHSG (29 percent) vs. pre-MHSG (38 percent). Pre-MHSG however, the majority of the record retrieval occurred prior to prescreen submission to the MEPS. Post-MHSG increased the frequency in which recruiters are required to submit supplemental paper records after the first prescreen submission to the MEPS, thereby creating an additional review of the applicable paper records, extending the contact to contract timeline and increasing the uncertainty of when prescreen review would be completed.

Services' note three primary reasons for the increase in contact to contract time: 1) records returned for lack of medical records in HIE; 2) an increase in disqualification rates requiring an increase in applicants waiting on waiver approval; and 3) pre-MHSG recruiters expected 70 percent of their applicants to floor within 48 hours because they did not disclose any medical conditions; now HIE provides authoritative health information on an applicant's medical history, which requires 5 to 10 days to review, adding to the contact to contract timeline.

USMEPCOM is addressing the concerns through a combination of efforts and pilots:

- Innovative business practices made possible by MHSG such as virtually cross-leveling workload across all MEPS and a new Prescreen Support Coordination Center (PSCC);
- Executing new pilots/processes to support Service Partners—Medical Accessions Records Pilot (MARP), Opening of HIE aperture, Conditional Delayed Entry Program (DEP) Pilot;
- Ongoing DHA/Cerner engagement to focus partnership on utilizing HIE capabilities to support USMEPCOM and Recruiting Services' mission.

Access to authoritative health information is leading to the discovery of disqualifying or potentially disqualifying conditions with increased frequency. Since MHS-G deployment across USMEPCOM in March 2022, 29 percent of all medical exams result in a disqualification decision compared to 20 percent for the same time period in fiscal year 2021.

The services may choose to waive a medical standard based on the specific needs of the individual service and the degree of the individual's diagnosis. Due to increase in disqualifications, as a result of additional information available via the HIE, waiver request volume and review timelines have increased. Each service,

through their Service Medical Waiver Review Authorities (SMWRA) establishes their own individual process, but also has the ability to request additional consults/test to provide more information as a means to ultimately determine the applicant's potential for a successful military career. Implementation of MHS-G has improved the fidelity of the process by providing access to a more comprehensive medical history record and allowing for more informed qualification decisions.

Vice Admiral CHEESEMAN. Yes, Navy has experienced a delay in processing applicants since the introduction of MHS Genesis. With the implementation of MHS Genesis, Navy initially observed an increase of 29.6 days (from 33.8 days to 63.4 days) from the date of an applicant's final interview until their first recorded contract when comparing data from June to November 2021 with data from December 2021 to May 2022. Navy addressed internal inefficiencies impacting this delay and realized an improvement of 3.5 days from June to September 2022 (from 63.4 days to 59.9 days). Navy is working with Center for Navy Analysis (CNA) analysts to perform a root cause analysis to better understand where additional delays are being realized to further address the delays with resources or policy changes and to inform discussions between Navy and MEPCOM on this topic.

Lieutenant General MILLER. Yes, the DAF is aware of the increase in processing time following the MHS Genesis rollout. There are continued efforts to enhance records quality and availability with health information exchange partners, such as expansion to the Care Quality network with a record locator service to improve queries for missing records. The Defense Health Agency estimates that the inclusion of the Care Quality network may increase record coverage to as much as 90 to 95 percent. Furthermore, a "seamless exchange" effort is in development to remove data duplication, provide data provenance and auto-ingestion of data from trusted partners that meets stringent quality requirements to reduce provider time to ingest the data from external partners.

Dr. STROBL. We fully support the intent of the MHS Genesis; however, current implementation has made recruiting more challenging. Specifically, the Health Information Exchange (HIE) pull at accessions, and the additional time it takes to process, has inhibited production. We support more resourcing in order to decrease processing time. It is worth noting that our data has not shown a significant spike in medical disqualifications, which we attribute to how well our recruiters screen applicants.

26. Senator WARREN. Ms. Miller, what quality assurance measures are being implemented and training programs are being delivered to MEPS staff in preparation for, or during the deployment of MHS Genesis?

Ms. MILLER. The Defense Health Agency (DHA) prescribes the training required for each user role for government employees and contracted medical providers. MEPS personnel were, and continue to be, trained in accordance with the DHA mandated user role training via Joint Knowledge Online (JKO) platform. USMEPCOM has established standard operating procedures to manage and ensure all members are properly trained before gaining access to the system and have the correct system user role assigned. USMEPCOM vigilantly manages who has access to the system, quickly removing those who have departed the command and granting access to newly assigned personnel. Currently, USMEPCOM has over 3400 trained users active in the system.

27. Senator WARREN. Lieutenant General Stitt, Vice Admiral Cheeseman, Lieutenant General Miller, Dr. Strobl, each service is responsible for reviewing and providing recommendations on medical waivers for applicants. AMSARA also reports that the Navy, Marine Corps, and Air Force processes approximately 4,000 medical waivers annually, while the Army processes about 8,000 medical waivers annually. What is the average length of time to process a waiver once all medical documentation is received from an applicant?

Lieutenant General STITT. In general, the average processing time for a medical waiver is between 21–45 days if complete medical documentation is presented up front. In cases where there is incomplete medical documentation, the medical waiver process could take longer.

Vice Admiral CHEESEMAN. The average length of time for the Navy Recruiting Command medical waivers team to process a waiver once all medical documentation is received is between 1 and 2 days.

Lieutenant General MILLER. The current average timeline for processing a waiver is approximately 40 days.

Dr. STROBL. Once all medical documentation is obtained, which can take from seven to over 30 days depending on the HIE pull, the average time to process a medical waiver from the Recruiting Station to the date of completion is 2.2 days.

Due to improved coordination and partnership with BUMED, the average processing time has dropped by almost 93 percent over the past few years; previous processing time was close to 30 days.

28. Senator WARREN. Ms. Miller, in June 2022, the Secretary of Defense announced policy changes that allows certain servicemembers with HIV to continue serving in the military without any restrictions on deployability or eligibility to become a commissioned officer. However, these policy changes do address applicants with HIV who may still be medically disqualified from joining the military. Why are applicants with HIV, but perhaps are clinically undetectable and have no clinically undetectable and have no symptoms, still disqualified from joining the military?

Ms. MILLER. The Secretary of Defense released a memorandum on June 6, 2022 updating the Department's policies on HIV-positive personnel serving within the Armed Forces. Under the updated policies, individuals who are seeking a commission as a Military Service Academy cadet/midshipman, a contracted SROTC cadet/midshipman, or current Service members in an in-service commissioning program that have been identified as HIV-positive, are asymptomatic, and who have a clinically confirmed undetectable viral load will have no restrictions applied to their deployability or to their ability to commission solely on the basis of their HIV positive status. It is important to note that the memo is not applicable to new accessions at this time.

Additionally, the Secretary of Defense also directed the establishment of a working group to develop proposed standards for conducting case-by-case determinations with regards to accession, retention, and deployability of individuals who have been identified as HIV-positive, are asymptomatic, and have a clinically confirmed undetectable viral load and to consider additional HIV-related matters, as appropriate. The working group is actively working to consider and make recommendations on how best to address HIV-related issues within the Department.

#### QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY SENATOR GARY C. PETERS

##### BENEFIT DISPARITY BETWEEN COMPONENTS

29. Senator PETERS. DODI 1215.07 (Service Credit for Non-Regular Retirement), states that it is DOD policy to use uniform procedures to manage the crediting and accounting of active and reserve service of servicemembers for non-regular retirement. The Command and Control CBRNE Response Enterprise (C2CRE) consists of two Army Reserve component task forces that maintain a full-time posture to meet mission requirements. One task force is an Army Reserve organization, while the other is an Army National Guard organization. These organizations perform the same mission and are each subject to non-regular retirement, yet only the Army Reserve organization is earning the Early Retirement Credit. Attempts to correct this disparity were met with concurrence by the Deputy Director of the Army National Guard and acting Assistant Secretary of the Army for Manpower and Reserve Affairs in 2017. However, they were halted by the Principal Deputy of the Assistant Secretary of Defense while acknowledging soldiers performing the same mission were receiving different benefits. Constituents in the National Guard organization have expressed their frustration to my office for what they feel is the unequal treatment for their service to our nation.

Ms. Miller, how is the Department of Defense addressing issues such as this in attempts to retain servicemembers that may consider leaving due to unequal treatment?

Ms. MILLER. The Department is addressing the equity disparity through continued legislative efforts to enact Reserve component (RC) Duty Status Reform (DSR). RC DSR would fundamentally change the current RC duty status authority structure and would align pay and benefits to the newly established duty categories creating benefit parity across the RC. The Department's RC DSR proposal has strong support from the Services, the National Guard Bureau, the Adjutants General Association of the United States (AGAUS), the Council of Governors and the Department of Veteran Affairs. With continued congressional support, the Department remains committed to getting this legislation enacted.

##### ACCOUNTING FOR THE IMPACTS OF NON-FEDERAL ACTIVATIONS OF NATIONAL GUARDSMEN

30. Senator PETERS. Lieutenant General Stitt and Lieutenant General Miller, the Army and Air Force must consider the challenges facing the National Guard as it forms a critical component of your overall personnel readiness. Data provided by

National Guard Bureau indicates that the quantity of guardsmen that failed to earn enough retirement points for a creditable year of service has increased sixfold (0.64 percent to 3.85 percent) from 2012 through 2021, with nearly half of this spike (2.1 percent to 3.85 percent) coming after 2019. While many factors contribute to this data, the timeframe coincides with unprecedented strings of title 32 and state activations to support civil authorities during the COVID pandemic and civil unrest.

What are your services doing to ensure that the resources poured into recruiting and training soldiers and airmen in the National Guard are protected from retention issues that may be caused by high levels of Non-Federal deployment and potential burnout?

Lieutenant General STITT. The Army National Guard (ARNG) as part of the total Army provided extraordinary support to our communities and our country during the COVID pandemic. The effects of the COVID pandemic in concert with myriad other factors collectively inhibited the abilities of ARNG soldiers from earning sufficient retirement points for a creditable year of service. The Department of the Army provided policies to allow the Reserve components (ARNG and USAR) to conduct drill weekends virtually to help RC soldiers earn adequate retirement points for creditable year of service during the COVID pandemic. Recruiting and retaining talent within the Army in all components is our number one priority.

Lieutenant General MILLER. The ANG has maintained high retention rates of 91 percent or higher over the past 3 years. The increased activations for domestic operations missions have not negatively impacted retention. Results from exit surveys and feedback from Retention Managers indicate that ANG members view the Covid-19 operations as a way to contribute to their local communities. The vast majority of duty performed by ANG Airmen was in Federal status vs. State status, which did not negatively impact members acquiring enough points for a “good year.” Additionally, ANG has been focused on quality of life initiatives to retain airmen, including career broadening opportunities, and access to resources such as financial planning and childcare during drill weekends.

31. Senator PETERS. Lieutenant General Stitt and Lieutenant General Miller, would you consider a process that protected guardsmen from failing to achieve retirement year credit by accounting for time served in a non-Federal status to fulfill minimum Federal retirement point requirements?

Lieutenant General STITT. We are fully committed to ensuring all our Reserve component soldiers (ARNG and USAR) achieve retirement year credit for services performed in support of our communities and our country. The Department of the Army is open to exploring options enabling all our soldiers to receive appropriate retirement credits. It is the Department of the Army’s priority to make sure we take care of our soldiers and their families. My staff and I are fully committed to working closely with the ARNG and the USAR to explore options and concepts for RC soldiers to receive appropriate retirement year credits for their service, and to ultimately achieve full retirement.

Lieutenant General MILLER. The ANG does not typically perform non-Federal service for extended periods of time, by design Domestic Operations missions are for emergency response. Longer term missions typically equate to a Presidential declaration which usually provides Federal resources for continued duty. For airmen who do perform State Active Duty (non-Federal) missions, they would have the opportunity to make up any time missed as a result of that duty.

Specific to the mission impact/limitation related to the COVID-19 Pandemic—On 6 January 2022, Secretary of the Air Force delegated authority to the Director, Air National Guard to grant retirement points pursuant to Section 516 of Public Law 116-283 and DODI 1215.07, Service Credit for Non-Regular Retirement, paragraphs 2.3.f. and 3.6.

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#### QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY SENATOR THOM TILLIS

##### MARKETING AND ADVERTISING

32. Senator TILLIS. Lieutenant General Stitt, the Army requested \$691 million for recruiting and advertising in fiscal year 2023, this is only two percent more than was appropriated in fiscal year 2022. Given inflation, this small increase in funding is actually a cut. Given the challenging recruiting environment, do you think the Army should be looking to increase the budget for recruiting and advertising more than they have in the President’s Budget request?

Lieutenant General STITT. The Army, through the Army Enterprise Marketing Office, was allocated fewer dollars than requested for the last three budget years and

incurred decrements after the President's Budget was signed, further reducing the reach of our marketing messages. We have submitted Unfunded Requirements (UFRs) for additional marketing and recruiting resources each of the last 3 years. The Army is transitioning to a new marketing campaign and relaunching the Army brand in fiscal year 2023. The Army intends to prioritize marketing and recruiting in order to ensure messaging reaches not just more prospects, but the right prospects and influencers alike, making our efforts more efficient and effective, and sustaining our All Volunteer Force.

33. Senator TILLIS. Ms. Miller, across the board, does the Department spend enough on marketing and advertising to have a real ability to change the public narrative regarding military service?

Ms. MILLER. As a fundamental tenet of the All-Volunteer Force, the Department relies upon its citizens to volunteer in sufficient numbers to meet end-strength requirements. The Department does undertake considerable effort to articulate a cogent "value proposition" to the American people that military service is a noble calling worthy of their time and talents. The Department must continue to invest in sustained resourcing for marketing and advertising in direct support of recruiting not just to generate leads but also to grow consideration for service. Approximately 15 percent of young adults (17–35) report receiving impressions about military service from military advertisements, with about half of these young adults (55 percent) reporting that this impression was positive. However, over half of young adults (57 percent) report receiving an impression about the military from various media sources (e.g., newspapers, websites, social media, TV shows, movies, etc.) with few of these young adults reporting that this impression was positive (30 percent). Thus, currently our advertising reach is limited based on current spending. The nature of today's fragmented media landscape contributes to an environment where the Department needs to invest in a plethora of channels/platforms to reach all segments of the recruiting market. Marketing dollars needed to work harder to break through the clutter to change the broader public narrative regarding military service.

#### MILITARY COMPENSATION

34. Senator TILLIS. Ms. Miller, DOD surveys say that pay and benefits are the number one reason for people to consider enlisting in the military. The most recent Quadrennial Review of Military Compensation found that enlisted pay is estimated to be at the 85th percentile of comparable civilian wages. That is a good news story. What is the Department doing to better educate the American people about the value of the military compensation and benefits package?

Lieutenant General MILLER. While the Department and the Services consistently present messages that highlight the military's competitive employment package, focusing on these benefits is not enough to change how the youth of today view the military. The Department and Services believe that marketing and outreach campaigns must focus on bridging knowledge gaps, correcting misperceptions, and providing positive messages that raise the esteem of joining the military. Such actions are critical to broadening the general interest in military service. Our messaging strategies must also highlight the intrinsic aspects of military service and how the military can help today's youth achieve their personal and professional goals.

#### FISCAL YEAR 2022 RECRUITING STATUS

35. Senator TILLIS. Lieutenant General Stitt, the Army started this fiscal year with a goal of recruiting 65,000 new soldiers, it later revised this goal down to 60,000. Can you please tell us how many recruits the Active Duty Army will actually achieve this year?

Lieutenant General STITT. The Army accessed 44,901 soldiers in fiscal year 2022.

36. Senator TILLIS. Lieutenant General Stitt, Vice Admiral Cheeseman, Lieutenant General Miller, Dr. Strobl: The recruiting business relies on something called the "Delayed Entry Program" or DEP to bank recruits during the summer months in order to have an adequate supply of new recruits during the slower winter months. It's my understanding that all of the services have depleted the DEP in order to achieved the fiscal year 2022 recruiting mission. Please tell us how many recruits you typically like to have in your DEP at the end of the year, and what percentage of that you currently have?

Lieutenant General STITT. Historically, the Army has worked to maintain a DEP that is approximately 30 percent of its following year's accessions mission. The fiscal year 2023 DEP at the end of fiscal year 2022 was 4,800.

Vice Admiral CHEESEMAN. Navy targets entering a given fiscal year with 50 percent of the Future Sailors (FS) needed to achieve the annual recruiting mission already contracted into the Delayed Entry Program (DEP). Given the fiscal year 2023 Active component accession mission of 37,700, Navy would have ideally entered fiscal year 2023 with 18,900 Future Sailors in DEP. Navy actually entered fiscal year 2023 with 4,652 Future Sailors in DEP. This is 24.6 percent of the DEP target.

Lieutenant General MILLER. The DAF prefers to have 25 percent of the following year's accession's goal ready in the Delayed Entry Program (DEP) bank. The DAF entered fiscal year 2023 with 16.75 percent of its annual goal in the DEP bank.

Dr. STROBL. We traditionally target a DEP start pool of 53 percent of the next year's accession mission. However, given the current environment, the Marine Corps began fiscal year 2023 with a DEP start pool of 29.5 percent.

37. Senator TILLIS. LTG Stitt, VADM Cheeseman, Lt Gen Miller, Dr. Strobl: What does a small DEP mean for the recruiting mission going into the next year?

Lieutenant General STITT. Historically a small DEP places more pressure on recruiters to meet their mission each month with no "reserves" in the bank to allow for unforeseen losses in the future soldier program. The Army entered fiscal year 2022 with a DEP that was smaller than 30 percent of that year's mission and through some of the previously mentioned initiatives has managed to compensate for those recruits who typically would be in the bank. With the Army's implementation of the Future Soldier Prep Course (FSPC) and other initiatives, fiscal year 2023 is an opportunity to re-build the DEP to a level that allows for an efficient flow of applicants into the training base while simultaneously looking ahead on the next recruit.

Vice Admiral CHEESEMAN. Navy typically operates with 40 to 50 percent DEP, which enables us to surge when accession requirements increase and to ensure that Navy is able to level-load accession requirements by rating such that the training pipeline fills all available school quotas while minimizing student wait times. With Navy's DEP at 4,652 as of 1 October, Navy projects a contract and ship environment through the first 8 months of fiscal year 2023 (October-May) where most Future Sailors will ship within 30–45 days of their initial contract. Additionally, Navy will not ship at Recruit Training Command (RTC) capacity at the beginning of fiscal year 2023 and will leave many school seats unfilled. The final trimester (June-September) will conversely include shipping weeks that stretch RTC to capacity as Navy maximizes shipping of graduating seniors to overcome accessions shortfalls earlier in the fiscal year.

Lieutenant General MILLER. The health of the DEP going into the next fiscal year is a crucial indicator to the level of difficulty and obstacles we may face to meet end-strength requirements. For the DAF, a small DEP means the DAF will need to recruit an additional 15 percent of our annual goal during the recruiting year. This is required to meet fiscal year 2023 accession requirements and establish an adequate DEP bank going into fiscal year 2024. The dwindling supply of recruits in the DEP impedes the Air Force from filling all quarterly mission requirements as in previous years (jobs are typically booked for the following quarter). The DAF must now work to fill accession needs for the current quarter which would normally be covered by the summer DEP bank.

Dr. STROBL. The significantly smaller DEP start pool means that meeting our recruiting mission in fiscal year 2023 will be more difficult than in fiscal year 2022. A smaller DEP requires recruiters to contract individuals to ship in the near term, which adds pressure on the force and reduces poolee preparation time to be successful at recruit training.

#### BENEFITS OF MILITARY SERVICE

38. Senator TILLIS. Dr. Strobl, the Marine Corps is known for discharging more people after their first term of enlistment than the other branches. What are the benefits of serving in the Marine Corps, even if for only a few years?

Dr. STROBL. Regardless of their career length, those who have served in uniform depart our ranks with increased professionalism, maturity, leadership, and skills that translate well into the civilian sector. Our veterans serve ably in industries, commercial sectors, and government throughout our Nation, bringing enhanced leadership and an exceptional work ethos back to their civilian communities. Transition programs like Skillbridge, education benefits like the GI Bill, and in-service training and certification opportunities, combined with Federal and State veterans hiring preferences, also add to the benefits of service. The badge of honor worn by all our veterans, regardless of length of service, create a personal sense of pride and

achievement that contribute to individual fulfillment and underlie the high functioning citizenship of our veteran community.

39. Senator TILLIS. Lieutenant General Stitt, veteran unemployment is lower than the national average and numerous studies have found that those who serve in the military have higher incomes and are less likely to be in poverty than non-veterans. A couple months ago, the paper I referred to in my opening statement found that “Army service closes nearly all of the Black-White earnings gap.” What is the Army doing to better explain to parents, teachers, guidance counselors, and other influencers that military service will help set young people up with the skills and experience needed for a great life?

Lieutenant General STITT. The influencer network upon whom our young people seek advice and guidance constitutes one of the Army’s most important engagement opportunities. Understanding the benefits of service in the Army and then communicating those benefits with the American people are responsibilities the Army takes seriously.

The paper you referenced is “Army Service in the All-Volunteer Era,” a peer-reviewed paper published in the Quarterly Journal of Economics, the top-ranked journal in economics, by economists at West Point’s Office of Economic and Manpower Analysis, Brigham Young University, and the U.S. Treasury. The paper was the product of independent academic research and conducted on U.S. Department of Treasury servers.

As this paper finds, the Army provides a world of possibilities to American youth through valuable leadership experience, technical skills training, excellent health care, and access to the GI Bill. The Army knows the benefits of service in its ranks and is communicating those benefits to America’s youth and their influencers through 1) national marketing campaigns, 2) senior leader public engagements, and 3) recruiter-level engagements with local communities.

1. National Media Campaigns. The Army currently has several national campaigns underway to inform America’s youth and their influencers of the benefits of Army service through multi-channel content distribution (e.g., television, social media, direct mail, etc.)
  - a. What’s Your Warrior. Started in November 2019, this campaign highlights the breadth and depth of Army opportunities by communicating the many ways to be a warrior. The Army offers a far broader range of professional roles and training than most Americans realize. The purpose of the “What’s Your Warrior” is to inform prospects and their influencer networks on the substantial opportunities to serve in meaningful ways they may have not before considered.
  - b. Know Your Army. Started in April of this year, this campaign highlights the wealth of Army benefits that can help today’s youth achieve their personal and professional goals. Market research indicates the American people are not aware of the benefits package associated with Army service. Furthermore, it is not clear to them how these benefits enable a soldier’s short-term and long-term goal achievement and wellness. Targeted at both prospects and influencers, “Know You’re Army” describes tangible and intangible benefits conveyed through authentic storylines and vignettes.
  - c. Passions. Started in May of this year, this campaign leverages real, currently serving, young soldiers to convey relatability and trust with current eligible youth. The objective of “Passions” is to communicate to prospects and their influencers that people like themselves or their young person have found purpose and success through Army service.
  - d. Additionally, The National Guard campaign, “The Next Greatest Generation,” and an officer focused campaign, “Decide to Lead,” are currently building awareness for part-time opportunities in the National Guard and informing the public of opportunities to serve as officers in the Army.
2. In addition to the marketing campaigns described above, Army senior leaders continue to communicate the benefits of Army service to national audiences through engagements with the public. For example, Army Senior Leaders in the accessions enterprise have recently held engagements at the Association of the United States Army Annual Meeting and Exposition, visited the National Future Farmers of America Convention and Expo, and penned an Op-Ed in the Wall Street Journal, all highlighting the opportunities and benefits available to young people in the Army.
3. Locally, Army Recruiters continue to directly engage with prospects and influencer populations in primary and secondary schools through 44 Battalions, with School Recruiting Programs (SRP) nested within 6 Brigades across the Nation. School Recruiting Programs build relationship between Army re-

recruiters and local school systems to inform high-school principals, counselors, and other staff and faculty of the vast opportunities afforded by Army Service. United States Army Recruiting Command also engages by participating in national, State, and local level conferences with prospects and influencers, as well as educator tours for the influencers.

Educating influencers on the benefits Army service provides to young people is a vital component of the Army's recruiting efforts. The Army takes this responsibility seriously and is currently engaged in a multifaceted approach to inform influencers of the benefits of Army service. The goal of these efforts is to revitalize the Army brand among the public and to expand marketing expertise throughout the Army enterprise. These efforts will yield higher-quality recruits and deliver the talent required to field a force capable of Multi Domain Operations.

40. Senator TILLIS. Ms. Miller, why do you think potential recruits and their families don't have a better impression of military service?

Ms. MILLER. The low military presence in many American communities, base closures, a declining veteran population and only 13 percent of 16 to 24-year-old youth having a parent who served in the military have collectively contributed to military service being "out of sight and out of mind" for many youth and their adult influencers. As a result, youth and their families rely on stereotypes about military service and servicemembers as the basis for their decision to serve. However, in those areas with a larger military presence including more veterans, military bases, military marketing and recruiters, we observe more favorable association toward service.

#### ACCESS TO HIGH SCHOOLS

41. Senator TILLIS. Lieutenant General Miller, current law requires high schools to provide military recruiters the same access to students as colleges and other employers. In your experience, do schools comply with this requirement? What do you do if they don't?

Lieutenant General MILLER. In our experience, many schools do comply with this requirement. If a school refuses to provide what is required by law then the recruiter notifies their leadership for support. If, after leadership engagement the school continues to refuse to comply, then that school is entered into the Recruiter Access to High Schools (RAHS) data base as a non-compliant school. Once it's confirmed that two or more services have identified the same non-compliant school, then these entities work directly with the Department of Education, State School officials, and the non-complaint school to obtain compliance.

42. Senator TILLIS. Lieutenant General Stitt, are there any changes to the law that would help improve the Army's ability to engage with high school students?

Lieutenant General STITT. In a time when recruiting is critical to the viability of Army readiness and national security, we propose a legislative change that would allow recruiters to visit high schools at least monthly vice the access currently provided in law which states—"the same access to secondary school students as is provided generally to postsecondary educational institutions or to prospective employers of those students." Having meaningful access to our high school market is critical to build relationships, change the narrative about the Army, and correct misconceptions about service. By updating this language, recruiters will receive "meaningful" access to schools versus "passive" access that they sometimes encounter.

We also propose legislation that benefits all students and the youth today regardless if they choose military service or not as a career option. We request to designate the ASVAB Career Exploration Program as a "nationally recognized assessment" that would encourage students to explore a wide variety of careers to help them align their strengths and interests with a post-secondary plan that works. Often, students try to make decisions about college or careers before they have really spent time thinking about their own interests, values, talents, and abilities. While the ASVAB measures developed abilities and helps predict future academic and occupational success, the ASVAB CEP is the only complete, federally funded career planning program sponsored by the Department of Defense available at no cost to schools nationwide. The goal of the ASVAB Program is to give students the opportunity to explore a variety of careers using knowledge they have gained about their interests and skills through assessment components and structured activities.

Overall, ASVAB CEP benefits students, parents, educators, and counselors, while empowering young people to know their options and choose the best course of action. Through this comprehensive, no cost, no commitment career planning resource, students receive a high quality, career exploration and planning materials at no cost

to high schools throughout the country. It also gives students the opportunity to explore a variety of careers in the context of their interests and skills through assessment components and structured activities. Students benefit by understanding that their grades and test scores are only part of the picture when exploring career options. When making career plans, it is helpful for students to have a good understanding of their likes and dislikes, as well as their strengths. Often, students try to make decisions about college or careers before they spend time thinking about their own interests, values, talents, and abilities. Students also benefit by understanding that their grades and test scores are only part of the picture when exploring career options and the fact that many other factors are important in determining which occupations will bring personal success and fulfillment.

#### JROTC

43. Senator TILLIS. Lieutenant General Stitt, is JROTC an effective recruiting tool for the Army? If not, what can be done to make JROTC a better recruiting partner?

Lieutenant General STITT. Junior Reserve Officers' Training Corps (JROTC) serves as a citizenship program and is not a recruiting program. It has however, a positive impact on developing propensity for service and recruiting. In accordance with 10 USC § 2031, the purpose of JROTC is "to instill in students in United States secondary educational institutions the values of citizenship, service to the United States (including an introduction to service opportunities in military, national, and public service), and personal responsibility and a sense of accomplishment."

Survey research conducted by the Department of Defense (DOD) Joint Advertising and Marketing Research Studies indicates that between 2012 to 2021, 14–21 percent of Regular Army enlistments participated in JROTC. United States Army Cadet Command (USACC) analysis indicates from fiscal years 2019 to 2021, 44 percent of Regular Army enlistments came from a school with a DOD JROTC program, and 21 percent came from schools with an Army JROTC program. Additionally, the fiscal year 2022 Army Senior Reserve Officers' Training Corps (SROTC) On-Campus Market Potential Survey indicates that 27 percent of freshman-year ROTC Cadets and 23 percent of junior-year Cadets participated in JROTC. JROTC Cadets earned 26 percent of Army SROTC scholarships in fiscal year 2021.

USACC has 1,716 JROTC programs across the United States and in Department of Defense Dependents Schools overseas. We plan to expand to 1,729 schools in fiscal year 2023 and to 1,734 in fiscal year 2024 to increase access to this critical youth citizenship program. We are pursuing additional growth (fiscal year 2025 to 2029) to improve fair and equitable distribution of JROTC programs across the country. Congress' continued support of JROTC is crucial to supporting this growth.

#### MILITARY AND VETERAN SERVICE ORGANIZATIONS

44. Senator TILLIS. Ms. Miller, military and veteran service organizations play an important role in helping the military and veteran community, but at the same time they often paint a negative picture of military service to those who not already part of their community, who are exactly the people we need to serve. What can the Department do to partner with MSOs and VSOs in the area of military recruiting?

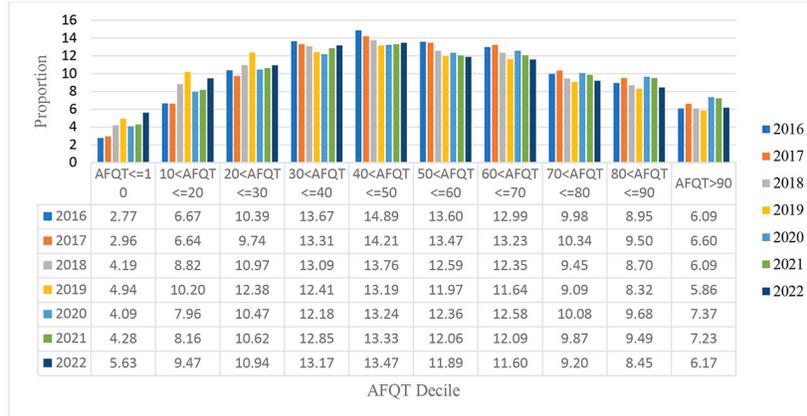
Ms. MILLER. The Department and the Services recognize that personal engagements, in concert with multi-media campaigns, are critical to creating awareness of the many opportunities the military offers, as well as narrowing the military-civilian divide. Outside of formal recruiting functions, current and former Service members must serve as active brand Ambassadors for the military. Post COVID-19, the Department and the Services are currently working to rebuild partnerships with community leaders to provide advocacy for military service and overcoming misperceptions of the military among adult influencers and youth. While the Department and the Services have engaged with MSOs and VSOs in the past, we will continue to explore how we can further expand the role of these recruiting partners as active brand Ambassadors to achieve our recruiting goals.

#### AFQT

45. Senator TILLIS. Ms. Miller, please provide a summary of AFQT scores since 2016 broken out by state, year, and AFQT decile.

Ms. MILLER. The graph below provides requested scores, from fiscal year 2016—fiscal year 2022, segregated by year and AFQT decile. This data is as of August, 2022, and the fiscal year 2022 data represents over 90 percent of scores from fiscal year 2022. Results demonstrate that fiscal year 2022 score patterns are closely aligned with fiscal year 2018/2019.

AFQT Deciles by Fiscal Year: Army, Navy, AF, and MC Combined



Analysis segregating data by State is not available. The ASVAB is administered to applicants population who self-select to participate in the ASVAB testing program. As a result, scores do not represent a random geographic sample of American youth and do not accurately describe ASVAB performance across the national youth population. Any comparison and rank ordering of scores across sub-groups such as states is likely to be non-representative of true differences between states and is not an appropriate method to identify states with the lowest performance.

QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY SENATOR TOMMY TUBERVILLE

PILOT PROGRAM

46. Senator TUBERVILLE. Lieutenant General Stitt, beginning 13 October 2021, members of this Committee, myself included, were briefed on a transformative, equitable, sustainable initiative involving collegiate athletics and national service. It's a 2-part effort; the first involving market intelligence delivered by a defense contractor, and the second involving a new pathway to service, or what U.S. Army Training and Doctrine Commanding General, GEN Paul Funk, referred to on a video conference on November 30th 2021, as a "21st Century pathway to service." The state of Alabama's Congressional delegation offered the Army our full support to pilot this program across our state's NCAA Division 1 colleges and universities. On the 30th of November 2021, GEN Funk asked the Contractor, Orchestra Macrosystems, to pilot the program. To date, the Army has not moved forward despite the Army acknowledging the existence of a contracting vehicle available for usage, plus available funding. Will you look into this issue and report back your findings on where it stands?

Lieutenant General STITT. United States Army Training and Doctrine Command, in conjunction with the Headquarters, Department of the Army G-1 and the Assistant Secretary of the Army—Manpower and Reserve Affairs, reviewed the Orchestra Macrosystems "21st Century Pathway to Service" initiative for potential implementation. Due to the significant policy implications associated with the initiative, there is a requirement to conduct a comprehensive analysis of the 2d and 3d order impacts if implemented. The Army already leverages collegiate athletics through the Army Senior Reserve Officers' Training Corps (SROTC) Program which is offered on -959 campuses across the country. Currently, United States Army Cadet Command (USACC) has 783 SROTC collegiate athletes enrolled in the program with 559 (71 percent) on scholarship. USACC will exceed its mission for fiscal year 2023 and continues building the out-year commissioning cohorts through fiscal year 2025 based on Army requirements.

Finally, the Secretary of the Army has stood up an Army Recruiting Task Force (ARTF) to examine transformational changes required to address the recruiting and retention headwinds the Army is and will continue to experience. Orchestra's Macrosystems "21st Century Pathway to Service" initiative has been recommended

to the ARTF for consideration since this initiative requires additional resources, policy decisions, and could require transformational changes to existing programs (ROTC scholarships).

EXTERNAL PRESSURES

47. Senator TUBERVILLE. Ms. Miller, the American public and this Committee have heard a constant drum beat from Civilian and Uniform leaders responsible for recruiting that a strong labor market is to blame for America's failure to meet its Congressionally mandated end-strength figures. What are you saying about America's military leadership, the culture of our armed services, and the opportunities that military service offers to Americans willing to serve that when, apparently, military service is considered an option only when the economy is poor? How can we expect this to be a sustainable model? Better yet, how do we expect to execute multi-domain operations when the American economy and its accompanying labor market are sound?

Ms. MILLER. As a key tenet of the All-Volunteer Force (AVF), the Department relies upon the willingness of the county's citizens to volunteer in sufficient numbers to meet end-strength goals during both good and bad economic times. The Department works hard to espouse a cogent value proposition to the American people concerning the benefits of service and does have a number of "levers" it is using, such as recruiting and retention bonuses, digital marketing campaigns, and enhanced recruiter manning, to manage the Force. Congress can support our recruiting efforts by ensuring continued and frequent access to high schools by our recruiters in order to provide an opportunity for the Department to bring our value proposition to the youth of America face-to-face.

