

DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE AUTHORIZATION  
REQUEST FOR APPROPRIATIONS FOR FISCAL  
YEAR 2023 AND THE FUTURE YEARS DEFENSE  
PROGRAM

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HEARING

BEFORE THE

COMMITTEE ON ARMED SERVICES  
UNITED STATES SENATE

ONE HUNDRED SEVENTEENTH CONGRESS

SECOND SESSION

ON

**S. 4543**

TO AUTHORIZE APPROPRIATIONS FOR FISCAL YEAR 2023 FOR MILITARY  
ACTIVITIES OF THE DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE, FOR MILITARY CON-  
STRUCTION, AND FOR DEFENSE ACTIVITIES OF THE DEPARTMENT OF  
ENERGY, TO PRESCRIBE MILITARY PERSONNEL STRENGTHS FOR  
SUCH FISCAL YEAR, AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES

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**PART 6**  
**PERSONNEL**

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APRIL 27, 2022



DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE AUTHORIZATION REQUEST FOR APPROPRIATIONS FOR FISCAL YEAR 2023 AND THE FUTURE YEARS DEFENSE PROGRAM—Part 6  
PERSONNEL

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**DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE AUTHORIZATION  
REQUEST FOR APPROPRIATIONS FOR FIS-  
CAL YEAR 2023 AND THE FUTURE YEARS  
DEFENSE PROGRAM**

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**WEDNESDAY, APRIL 27, 2022**

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

**MILITARY AND CIVILIAN PERSONNEL PROGRAMS**

The Subcommittee met, pursuant to notice, at 3:01 p.m., in room 222, Russell Senate Office Building, Senator Kirsten Gillibrand (Chairman of the Subcommittee) presiding.

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

**OPENING STATEMENT OF SENATOR KIRSTEN GILLIBRAND**

Senator GILLIBRAND. Good afternoon, everyone. The Subcommittee meets today to receive testimony on the military and civilian personnel programs at the Department of Defense (DOD) and the military services in review of the Administration's defense authorization request for fiscal year 2023.

This is the Subcommittee's annual personnel posture hearing that establishes a foundational record for the committee of the Department's full range of activities concerning matters affecting servicemembers, their families, retirees, and the Department's civilian workforce.

It provides the Department the opportunity to discuss their personnel policy priorities. For witnesses, welcome. Thank you for appearing. We will have two panels today.

The first panel consists of officials from the Office of the Secretary of Defense who cover the full range of military and civilian personnel programs, the Honorable Gil Cisneros, Undersecretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness, Ms. V. Penrod, Acting Assistant Secretary of Defense for Manpower and Reserve Affairs, Dr. David J. Smith, Acting Principal Deputy, Assistant Secretary of Defense for Health Affairs, and Ms. Elizabeth B. Foster, Executive Director of Force Resiliency, Executive Director, Office of Force Resiliency—same thing.

The second panel will include the Senior Personnel Chiefs of Military Services, Lieutenant General Gary Brito, Deputy Chief of Staff, G-1, Vice Admiral John B. Nowell, Junior Deputy Chief of

Naval Operations, N-1, and Chief of Naval Personnel, Lieutenant General David A. Ottignon, Deputy Commandant of the Marine Corps for Manpower Reserve Affairs, Ms. Gwendolyn R. DeFilippi, Assistant Deputy Chief of Staff of the Air Force for Manpower Personal Services, and Ms. Patricia Mulcahy, Chief Human Capital Officer, United States—United Space Force.

Before I continue, I want to recognize Ms. Penrod, who has appeared before the Subcommittee on a number of occasions, but for whom this hearing will be her last. She is retiring imminently, I am told, after more than five decades of service to the Department of Defense.

This includes 16 years as a senior executive in the Office of the Secretary of Defense (OSD) and 35 years in the Air Force, as both an enlisted airman and an officer working on behalf of our servicemembers, their families, and the civilian workforce who supports them.

Thank you for your service, Ms. Penrod.

[Clapping.]

Senator GILLIBRAND. At this hearing last year in May, I began by noting that our country has been in a state of continuous war for nearly 20 years, and that with the impending withdrawal of combat troops from Afghanistan we were closing one chapter and beginning another. In the year since, we have indeed seen a new chapter unfold with continued resurgence of great power competition and Vladimir Putin's unjustified, unprovoked, and unwarranted war on Ukraine.

Coupled with the persistent effects of global pandemic, increasingly sophisticated cyber and other asymmetric tech threats, and the disruptive effects of ecological degradation and changing climate, the need for highly trained and capable military and civilian workforce within the Department of Defense and throughout the Federal Government has never been greater. We must commit to meeting these challenges by developing, fielding, and maintaining the world's most capable workforce.

I am going to submit the rest of my statement for the record, and I turn it over to Senator Tillis.

#### **STATEMENT OF SENATOR THOM TILLIS**

Senator TILLIS. Thank you, Madam Chairwoman. Thank you to the witnesses for being here. Ms. Penrod, given your future plans, I look forward to your unabridged and unbridled responses to our questions, but congratulations again. The 2023 National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) will coincide with the 50th anniversary of the creation of the All-Volunteer Force.

But I think it may be more accurate to describe the military as an all recruited force because it takes a large amount of resources to attract sufficient numbers of high quality Americans to military service.

To put it bluntly, I am worried we are now in the early days of a long term threat to the All-Volunteer Force, a small and declining number of Americans who are eligible and interested in military service.

Every single metric tracks the military recruiting environment is going in the wrong direction. In most cases, we are seeing the



worst numbers in the last two decades. Only 8 percent of young Americans have seriously considered joining the military. That is the lowest number since the late 90s and is 50 percent lower than it was during the deadliest days of the global war on terror.

Perhaps most alarming, today, only 23 percent of Americans are even eligible to enlist. That is down from 29 percent only a few years ago. We are fighting a war on two fronts right now. On the one side, we have a shrinking number of Americans who meet the minimum qualifications for military service.

On the other side, those who are qualified, have historically low levels of interest in putting on a uniform. This two front recruiting war is already affecting our military readiness. The Army plans to shrink by 12,000 soldiers next year, not because they want to and not because they were told to.

The new National Defense Strategy does not call for a smaller Army. The Army is cutting in strength because there are simply not enough recruits to go around. The other services are experiencing similar struggles at varying levels. Ensuring our military is sufficiently manned is the most important job the Subcommittee has.

I intend to spend most of today's hearing asking our expert witnesses what you intend to do and how we can help address these growing challenges. Thanks again to the witnesses for appearing before the committee. I look forward to your testimony.

Madam Chair, I do think we are going to have a vote in the middle of this. Are we are going to do a tag team so that we can keep things moving? So excuse us if one of us have to leave the room momentarily. Thank you.

Senator GILLIBRAND. Thank you very much, Senator Tillis. I would now like to call on Secretary Cisneros.

**STATEMENT OF THE HONORABLE GILBERT CISNEROS JR.,  
UNDER SECRETARY OF DEFENSE FOR PERSONNEL AND  
READINESS**

Mr. CISNEROS. Chairwoman Gillibrand, Ranking Member Tillis, and Members of the Personnel Subcommittee, thank you for the opportunity to testify before you today. We are here to discuss the Department's greatest strength, our people.

We are proud to represent the 3.3 million servicemembers and DOD civilians who defend our Nation every day and their families who serve alongside them. One of Secretary Austin's earliest messages to the force made clear that taking care of people is a National Security imperative.

This Administration has shown both in their words and actions, that DOD will invest in our greatest strategic advantage. This commitment is evident in the fiscal year 2023 defense budget request and our personnel policy efforts. While many personal—personnel priorities are reflected in the budget request, I will focus my remarks on a few priority areas.

First, recruiting, economic security, support to military families, Independent Review Commission on Sexual Assault in the Military, or IRC, and suicide. To build and maintain our global competitive advantage, we must recruit quality applicants in an ever changing landscape. The Department is in fierce competition for

skilled, relevant, and innovative talent. The labor market, exasperated by the effects of the pandemic and the military, civilian divide, creates a challenging recruiting environment.

You will hear from the services later today, but my team and I are working closely with them to leverage all authorities, resources, and tools to address these challenges. The pay raise of 4.6 percent in the budget request will enable recruiting, will appropriately compensate our workforce, and support the overall economic security of servicemembers and their families.

I cannot stress this enough, the economic security of our servicemembers is critical to readiness, and in total, the current military compensation and benefits package is fair and compares favorably with the private sector. To remain competitive, we must keep pace with private sector wage, or keep pace with private sector wage growth, which this pay raise does.

We are addressing rising housing costs by temporarily adjusting the basic allowance for housing in high cost areas, and thanks to your leadership, we are implementing the basic needs allowance with the first payment scheduled to go out in January 2023.

Our military families are vital to the readiness of our force. We are broadening employment support to military spouses by expanding the Military Spouse Employment Partnership Job Search Portal. We are working with all 50 States to improve State laws to ease occupational license portability.

Likewise, the Department is addressing access to childcare by increasing staff hiring, applying the \$15 per hour Federal minimum wage to childcare workers, and providing servicemembers fee assistance to offset the cost of in-home childcare. Taking care of our people goes beyond compensation. We must eliminate sexual assault and harassment to preserve readiness and support of a resilient and cohesive force.

The entire Department continues to work to implement the IRC's recommendations. Our budget request of \$489 million will enable us to invest in prevention to eliminate those wrongs. We are committed to making cultural change at every installation worldwide to tackle this problem.

We are also steadfast in our commitment to suicide prevention, and the well-being of servicemembers and their families, especially in light of the recent incidents involving those assigned to the USS *George Washington*. They are tragedies and we are working to learn more and to ensure the Navy has every resource they need. We are taking a public health approach, targeting the various underlying risk factors and mental health stressors.

We are enhancing protective measures such as social connections, coping skills and safety, and we are working to address the shortage of mental health providers, which is a national—nationwide problem. This includes providing care for anyone who needs it, whether this is in our direct care system or using our private sector network. One last issue. I would like to highlight our efforts in the diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility space.

Enhancing the DEIA [Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Accessibility] across our Department maximizes our ability to recruit and retain top talent. Secretary Austin recently designated me as the Chief Diversity and Inclusion Officer for the Department. In this

role, I will continue to bring about long term changes and work to support the factors that promote racial, ethnic, and gender diversity, and inclusion.

I will take steps to ensure our total force has an opportunity to achieve their professional goals and is a cohesive and ready force that reflects the diversity of our Nation. I shared a few of our major initiatives in my remarks today, but I would like—I would also like to mention an approaching milestone.

Next year, we will celebrate the 50th anniversary of the All-Volunteer Force. When this country eliminated the draft, we did not imagine the success the All-Volunteer Force would have in creating the most educated, professional, and lethal military force in history.

As we look to the next 50 years, it is imperative that we do not take what makes our military unparalleled and unmatched for granted, our people. Thank you for your continued support of our servicemembers and their families. We look forward to your questions.

[The joint prepared statement of The Honorable Gilbert Cisneros, Ms. Virginia Penrod, Dr. David Smith, and Ms. Beth Foster follows:]

JOINT PREPARED STATEMENT BY THE HONORABLE GILBERT CISNEROS, MS. VIRGINIA PENROD, DR. DAVID SMITH, AND MS. BETH FOSTER

Chairwoman Gillibrand, Ranking Member Tillis, and Members of the Personnel Subcommittee, thank you for the opportunity to testify before you, along with the other leaders of the Office of the Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel & Readiness (OUSD(P&R)), to discuss the Department of Defense's greatest strength—our people. We are proud to represent the 2.3 million Active and Reserve component servicemembers and over 900 thousand DOD civilians who defend our Nation every day, not to mention the families who serve alongside them.

In Secretary Austin's earliest Message to the Force and actions related to addressing sexual assault, he made clear that taking care of people is not only the right thing to do, but it is imperative for our national security. While past Administrations and DOD leaders have acknowledged the importance of the workforce, I believe President Biden, Secretary Austin, and Deputy Secretary Hicks have truly shown both in their words and actions that DOD will invest in our greatest strategic advantage, our people. This commitment is evident throughout the fiscal year 2023 Defense Budget.

To ensure our national security in both the near and long term, Secretary Austin identified three overarching ways in which we will carry out the newly released 2022 National Defense Strategy (NSD) priorities—integrated deterrence, campaigning, and building enduring advantage. While these three specific initiatives have different focus and goals, essential to each is having the right people today and in the future to carry out our strategic imperatives. To quote Secretary Austin, "[s]trategies mean little without the right people to execute them." Therefore, specifically under the umbrella of building enduring advantage, the Department, with P&R at the forefront, will focus on investing and building the best future force, strengthening readiness through resilience, enhancing accountable leadership, and supporting our servicemembers and their families.

RECRUITING THE RIGHT TALENT

A critical component to building enduring advantage is maintaining the flow of highly qualified recruits through the accession pipeline. We must invest in human capital initiatives to compete for, hire, develop, and retain highly skilled experts in the ever-changing national talent landscape. However, more so than in the recent past, the Department is in fierce competition for skilled, relevant and innovative talent to cultivate a technologically dominant force that is strategically ready, globally relevant and flexibly sustainable. Given the tight labor market exacerbated by the residual effects of the COVID-19 pandemic and general military-civilian disconnect, the Services are facing a challenging recruiting environment. The size and quality

of the youth market has changed very little in 10 years. Only 23 percent of today's youth are eligible for military service without a waiver, and only 2 percent are eligible, high-quality, and likely to serve. Youth propensity has declined over the last several years, from 13 percent in 2018 to 9 percent in 2021. This decline represents approximately 1 million fewer youth propensed for military service. Female propensity also declined during the same time period, from 10 percent in 2018 to 5 percent in 2021. It is likely that recruiting challenges will be present for the foreseeable future.

To address some of these challenges, the Services modified recruiting and basic training activities, and capitalized on innovative initiatives to leverage digital and virtual recruiting tools and engage prospective recruits. Working with the Services, P&R is focused on overcoming the ever-widening gap between the American people and the military by bolstering the strategic tools needed to expand outreach efforts to reach a diverse pool of youth across the Nation. We are ensuring that the Services have the necessary authorities and tools to recruit the most qualified cohort of soldiers, sailors, airmen, marines and guardians reflective of our Nation's tremendous talents and diversity. Additionally, Department leadership has addressed gender equity across the force from tackling barriers to childcare, heightened awareness, response, and prosecution of sexual assault/sexual harassment, and improvements to pregnancy and leave policies. The only way for us to compete, deter, and win in today's complex global environment is to find the most innovative and open-minded cadre of recruits from every part of this great Nation. We are marketing 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. We are also leveraging other outreach programs as recruiters' access to high schools have become more difficult over the years. The fiscal year 2023 Defense Budget reflects the Services' required resources to support these primary recruiting levers (recruiters, marketing, and bonuses) in order to help offset the difficult recruiting environment.

As you will hear directly from the Services on their outlook to meet their current fiscal year recruiting goals for Active and Reserve components, we believe the fiscal year 2023 Defense Budget, including the 4.6 percent military pay raise will help address some of the upcoming challenges. As you heard in testimony last week, ensuring we have the right number of people, with the right skills and talent, has the highest attention of Department's senior leadership. We are committed to not only meeting our military recruiting targets, but also finding the most qualified and mission ready talent this great Nation has to offer.

#### *DOD Civilian Workforce*

As critical enablers of our warfighters, DOD civilians perform functions in intelligence, research and development, equipment maintenance, healthcare, family support, base operating services, and other activities that directly support the military forces and readiness. The DOD civilian workforce possesses capabilities, expertise, and skills that directly impact DOD's worldwide military operational capabilities. The Department continuously strives to improve its ability to recruit, retain, develop, and reward the civilian workforce to support the warfighter and encourage innovative best practices throughout the armed forces.

One of the Department's biggest civilian workforce challenges is the competition for talent in innovation and cutting-edge fields that are in high demand across the public and private sectors, and critical to the support of DOD's national defense mission. Therefore, the Department continues to utilize a variety of human capital solutions to better compete and overcome market demands for these critical skills, including increased pay and other incentives. To that end, we thank Congress for providing streamlined direct hiring authority for critical scientific, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM), cyber, healthcare, and other positions. This is a critical tool to compete against the private sector by reducing our time-to-hire and allowing us to target the talent needed in these key areas.

The Department is exploring other options to narrow the talent gap between defense strategy and emerging technologies, to include resourcing the innovation workforce by recruiting, up- or reskilling, and retaining tech-savvy, data-skilled civilian talent, through public-private partnerships, working with universities, and other opportunities. We are also proactively growing and developing the pipeline of future talent and have seen great success in the use of a variety of internship, scholarship, and fellowship programs managed both at the enterprise and component levels, such as the Science, Mathematics, and Research for Transformation (SMART) program, the John S. McCain Strategic Defense Fellows Program, and the National Security Education Boren Scholarship and Fellowship programs. We must ensure

that strategic workforce planning and human capital management activities support the Department's need to shape a professional, agile, and ready civilian workforce.

#### RETAINING THE RIGHT TALENT

Not only do we have to recruit the right talent, but we need to retain and invest in our people to meet mission-critical needs now, as well as emerging mission requirements of the future. However, similar to recruiting, Services are also facing some retention challenges in certain high-demand, low-density fields due to a strong economy and high operational tempo. To address these specific skills challenges, we continue to use a mix of tailored retention bonuses and non-monetary incentives to enhance retention and fill military occupational specialty gaps. Thanks to Congress, we have recent legislative authorities that allow us to go beyond the traditional up or out structure, as well as allowing lateral entry of individuals with certain specialized skills and career intermission programs for servicemembers who need to step away from Active service to pursue educational or occupational opportunities or to address personal priorities. These incentives allow DOD to compete with the private sector for high-demand and critical talent. Another key retention and people focus area with the highest attention of the administration, is ensuring appropriate compensation for our servicemembers and strengthening the economic security of those who serve and their families.

#### *Compensation and Economic Security*

However, retention of quality talent is bolstered by more than bonuses and incentives. Ensuring that we are appropriately compensating our workforce and increasing the overall economic security of servicemembers and military families is critical to mission readiness. While we believe that the current military compensation package is fair and compares favorably with the private sector, in order to remain competitive, we must keep pace with private-sector wage growth and inflation. The 4.6 percent across-the-board basic pay raise included in the fiscal year 2023 Defense Budget request does just that. With low unemployment and increasing private-sector wages, we have to remain vigilant to ensure military compensation remains attractive so we can recruit and retain the force we need.

While the data shows that servicemembers are paid above most of their civilian counterparts, we also know that individual circumstances vary and there are those who are struggling to make ends to meet. To that end, Secretary Austin issued a memorandum in November 2021 announcing Department-wide efforts to strengthen economic security in the force. The Department recognizes some servicemembers and families are experiencing economic challenges related to the COVID-19 pandemic and increasingly competitive housing markets. To ease the financial burden of rising housing costs, we authorized temporary increases in Basic Allowance for Housing (BAH) rates for 56 Military Housing Areas. BAH is a fundamental part of the military pay package and BAH rates must be based on the costs of adequate housing for civilians with comparable income to members in the same area. The temporary BAH rate increases were available to servicemembers in areas where the COVID-19 pandemic had a significant impact on rental housing costs until the updated 2022 BAH rates were put into effect.

We are also grateful to Congress for recent legislation included in the fiscal year 2022 NDAA authorizing the Basic Needs Allowance (BNA), which supplements a servicemember's compensation up to 130 percent of federal poverty guidelines, for those whose household income falls below this threshold. This primarily affects junior servicemembers with large families. The Department is currently in the process of implementing this incentive and the first BNA payments are scheduled to go out in January 2023, as authorized by Congress.

While additional data collection and analyses are underway to understand the full scope of the issue, particularly around food insecurity, the Department is implementing solutions to aid those in need. With the understanding that a military family's economic security is critical not only a servicemember's well-being, but to command climate, mission readiness, and retention, the Military Departments and Service leadership are educating leaders at all levels of command to identify and support servicemembers experiencing economic insecurity, and direct them, and their spouses, to military and community resources. Department support in this area includes, among other things: financial assessments and counseling; improved access to and increased assistance with childcare; education subsidies and employment support for spouses; and increased access to nutritious and affordable food options. All these efforts are designed to reduce stigma, increase financial help seeking behaviors, and increase stability for servicemembers and families. The Department created a web-based Economic Security toolkit for commanders and service providers on Military OneSource to provide military leaders with existing resources and

flexibilities to address housing availability, financial well-being, and food security. As part of the campaign rollout, the toolkit was included in a SECDEF memorandum on Strengthening the Economic Security of the Force on November 17, 2021; included in a Defense.gov article; provided in a video developed by the Defense Visual Information Distribution Service; and featured continually on the Military OneSource website, social media and eNewsletters.

To address many of these issues, we will be working with the White House to initiate the 14th Quadrennial Review of Military Compensation (QRMC) later this year. This next iteration of the QRMC will serve as an opportunity to thoroughly review and assess our military compensation system to strengthen our members' economic security, and better attract and retain servicemembers and their families.

Likewise, our investments in the civilian workforce focus on the importance of federal employees as an element of the Department's Total Force. The 4.6 percent requested pay raise is critical to compete for, hire, develop, and retain highly skilled experts. The requested increase allows the Department to achieve and maintain technical and intellectual superiority, and remain competitive with private industry in attracting and sustaining a talented workforce.

In conjunction with the requested federal pay increase, the Office of Personnel Management (OPM) issued a memorandum on January 21, 2022 to Executive departments and agencies, "Achieving a \$15 Per Hour Minimum Pay Rate for Federal Employees." This change will impact over 67,000 federal employees, 57,500 of whom work at DOD. The affected DOD employees, including many military spouses, are in Nonappropriated Fund activities, providing valuable contributions as sales clerks, child care staff, food service workers, laborers, and in many other occupations serving our DOD communities. The minimum wage increase will also have a positive impact on DOD Morale, Welfare, and Recreation programs, allowing installations to attract, hire, and retain a high quality workforce and positively impact military families. Similarly, approximately 5,000 child and youth program employees have received a pay increase. The Department is exploring whether higher wages for the employees who provide these important services will attract more caregivers and, as a result, increase capacity for care.

#### *Child Care Access and Expansion*

Child care is a workforce enabler and a critical component of the readiness, efficiency, and retention of the Total Force. Our experience with COVID-19 also highlighted the importance of child care in contributing to the well-being and economic security of our families. Staffing shortfalls decreased the number of children cared for in installation and community-based programs. Affordable, quality child care continues to be a challenge facing many DOD families and the Nation writ large. Child care is among the lowest paid occupations in the Nation, and child care professionals with a similar education earn less than those working in different fields, which contributes to the persistent challenge of recruiting and retaining the workforce needed to meet the child care needs of our families.

To best support the child care needs of our servicemembers and civilian workforce, the Department will be investing in construction of on-base child development centers; expanding fee assistance programs; extending fee assistance programs to lower income DOD civilian families; and supporting public-private partnerships to increase child care capacity in high-demand, low-capacity areas. In October 2021, the Department adjusted the fee assistance amounts for which families would qualify, and implemented the \$1,500 monthly per child provider rate cap to match the traditional community-based fee assistance program. This adjustment increased the amount of fee assistance for which families are eligible.

The fiscal year 2023 Defense Budget included funding to continue a pilot program providing servicemembers financial assistance to offset the cost of in-home child care, such as care provided by nannies. It also expands The Military Child Care in Your Neighborhood PLUS program which utilizes the States Quality Rating and Improvement Systems as an indicator of provider quality, in lieu of national accreditation, broadening the pool of providers eligible to receive fee assistance on behalf of military families.

P&R continues to work in collaboration with the Military Departments on the development and implementation of initiatives aimed at improving child care availability, addressing child care staffing challenges, exploring public-private partnerships, identifying construction requirements, and expanding our child care community-based fee assistance program. Addressing child care access for all servicemembers, as well as certain DOD civilians, is another critical element to building enduring advantage, and the right thing to do to take care of our people.

### *Military Spouse Employment*

We are especially cognizant of the sacrifice military spouses make in their careers or education as they move from one duty station to the next with their servicemember and other dependents. Therefore, DOD remains committed to providing military spouses with information, resources, and tools to assist in achieving their educational and employment goals. The Department's Spouse Education and Career Opportunities (SECO) program augments the Service's installation based programming through high quality virtual support. The Department continues to increase employment opportunities through the broadening of the Military Spouse Employment Partnership (MSEP), with a focus on critical employment sectors such as information technology, education, and small businesses. Broadening the MSEP program to include small businesses in military impacted communities will provide more employment opportunities for military spouses. As outlined in the "Strengthening America's Military Families" report, Federal agencies have committed to employing military spouses in partnership with the DOD. Sixteen Federal employers have joined MSEP, increasing employment opportunities for military spouses in the Federal sector. Military spouses can find employment opportunities from more than 540 MSEP employer partners via MSEP jobs portal. MSEP is made up of more than 500 companies, federal agencies, and non-profit organizations that are committed to recruit, hire, promote, and retain military spouses. To date, MSEP employer partners have hired more than 220,000 spouses.

In addition, to assist military spouses with starting and maintaining meaningful employment and careers, the Defense State Liaison Office works with state legislators in all 50 states to improve and enhance state laws governing occupational license portability and reciprocity. Again, Congress helped us in the fiscal year 2020 NDAA, authorizing DOD to enter into a cooperative agreement with the Council of State Governments (CSG) to support professions developing inter-state compacts for licensure. To date, five professions (teaching, clinical social work, massage therapy, dentistry/dental hygiene, and cosmetology/barbering) have been provided grants of up to \$1 million each and CSG has started convening advisory groups for each profession from September 2021—January 2022, and expects all compacts to be ready by January 2023.

Understanding that military spouses are usually transitory based on their servicemember's duty location we are addressing the ongoing challenge of ensuring they are aware of available resources and support to assist them. As directed by the fiscal year 2022 NDAA, we are implementing recommendations from the GAO to improve communications that engage military spouses with career assistance resources. Ensuring awareness and increasing utilization of resources across the force, from our youngest spouse to our most seasoned, is crucial to retaining our servicemembers and their families and ensuring family readiness.

### *Commissaries*

We are aware that the current economic conditions and COVID-19 have directly impacted our Commissaries. Access to grocery products worldwide remains a top-priority of the Defense Commissary Agency (DeCA) which continues to manage amplified supply chain issues, coupled with inflationary pressures, and increased expenses due to ground transportation shortfalls and delays. Our DeCA team is working with the U.S. Transportation Command (TRANSCOM) to prioritize shipments to overseas locations, ensuring product availability for those serving in OCONUS environments and continues to work with suppliers and distributors to meet the demand.

Defense Commissaries are DOD's first line of defense for families in need. Their primary purpose is to provide food security by offering healthy food at significant savings. The benefit enhances quality of life and readiness for military servicemembers, their families, retirees, Medal of Honor recipients, their authorized family members, and all veterans with a service-connected disability. Additionally, we continue to create innovative approaches to increase customer convenience and educate patrons on the value and the savings generated by using their well-deserved benefit.

### *COVID-19 Efforts and Way Ahead*

Mitigating COVID-19 will continue to be a top priority for the Department. We will align our activities with the White House, and federal partners, and our activities will be informed by the best science and evidence. The Department has met the COVID-19 challenge, harnessing our resources to provide needed support across the Nation and to stressed healthcare systems; administering millions of vaccines to over 90 percent of our servicemembers and millions of beneficiaries and workers;

and procuring personal protective equipment, tests, therapeutics, and tests on behalf of the Federal Government.

The Department will continue to support vaccination requirements. Our Force must remain healthy and ready to defend the Nation. Vaccination against COVID-19 helps us achieve that goal, and will ensure we remain the most lethal and ready force in the world. This fiscal year 2023 Defense Budget prioritizes the Department's response to the COVID-19 pandemic, allowing us to be equipped for any future challenges COVID-19 may present, as well as other biological threats, to challenge the American people.

As our employees re-enter the workplace, we cannot expect to return to "business as usual." Throughout the pandemic, we embraced telework and flexible schedules to achieve new efficiencies, and will continue to employ successful practices to promote a resilient and productive workforce.

#### RESILIENCE AND ACCOUNTABLE LEADERSHIP

In Secretary Austin's March 4, 2021, Message to the Force, he specifically called out the need to build resilience and readiness, and ensure accountable leadership under the broader goal to "Take Care of Our People." Much of P&R's focus under his leadership has been addressing these for which the Department has historically fallen short. Addressing these topics is critical to reflect our values, maintain cohesive and strong units that are necessary for battlefield effectiveness, and ensure our overall military readiness and leadership on the global stage. We continue efforts to address sexual assault and sexual harassment with an unprecedented level of leadership attention and resource investment. We are also assessing all obstacles in creating a more diverse, equitable, and inclusive workforce at all ranks—and ensuring accountable leadership that calls out behaviors that are antithetical to our values and undermine our readiness and discipline. The fiscal year 2023 Defense budget and current ongoing efforts reflect these priorities.

#### *Addressing Sexual Assault*

Sexual assault is not only a threat to our readiness but completely contrary to our values. We will not compromise on this issue, as rebuilding trust with the Force requires us to get this right. Therefore, the entire Department continues to work collaboratively—across Office of the Secretary of Defense (OSD) Components, Military Departments, and the National Guard Bureau to operationalize the Secretary's implementation guidance for recommendations from the Independent Review Commission on Sexual Assault in the Military (IRC). Sexual assault has a devastating impact not only on our military's readiness but also individual survivors, and we remain committed to ensuring that survivors receive recovery care and are able to continue their military career. In order to bring about significant change, it is clear the Department must make significant investments both in our efforts and resources to properly and effectively address sexual assault in the military. The fiscal year 2023 Defense budget does that.

Implementing the more than 80 IRC recommendations will require focused sustainment. Many recommendations (Tier 1 and Tier 2) are already ongoing or will begin in the short-term. Given the multi-pronged approach by and across every organization and installation worldwide, our plan reflects a conservative timeline to ensure we do this right and appropriately address any challenges or obstacles as we move across the tiers of recommendations. We are now developing IRC outcome metrics that will track and demonstrate progress implementing all recommendations, to include:

- Reforming military justice to put prosecution decisions for sexual assault, domestic violence, and other named offenses in the hands of trained, experienced and independent attorneys who report outside the command structure, and only to the civilian Secretaries of the Military Departments. This includes building a career track for military justice in each of the Services, to enable the development of a sustained cadre of these specialized prosecutors across the force.
- Fielding a full time, specialized prevention workforce in every Service to address risk and protective factors for sexual assault and other readiness impacting behaviors such as suicide and domestic violence.
- Revising our response workforce to provide sexual assault response coordinators and victim advocates with independence and expertise to foster recovery-oriented support and ensure victims have the resources they need, including phasing out the reliance on collateral duty/dual-hatted victim response personnel.

We believe our efforts will restore the trust and faith of our military, assist victims with recovery, and hold offenders appropriately accountable. We also want to express our appreciation to Congress for the sexual assault and sexual harassment prevention and response legislation included in the fiscal year 2022 NDAA, which



supported the IRC's recommendations and provided us additional authorities to implement these historic reforms. Now we ask for your support for the fiscal year 2023 Defense Budget request that will provide the necessary resources to make these historic changes to reform military justice, field the specialized prevention workforce, train and equip response personnel, and empower victims' recovery. As stated in the report of the Independent Review Commission on Sexual Assault in the Military, "Moving the needle on sexual harassment and assault will require new investments in victim services and prevention." Again, these efforts not only reflect our values, but they will have a direct impact on improving military readiness and ensuring the unit cohesion necessary for success on the battlefield.

On-Site Installation Evaluations (OSIEs) are another example of the unprecedented steps Secretary Austin has taken to eliminate the presence of harmful behaviors in the military, protect our people and improve readiness. OSIEs are innovative, global, and recurring activities to help leaders up and down the chain of command drive data-driven improvements to their command climates—not only to prevent sexual assault and harassment but also other harmful behaviors such as suicide. This initiative expands the Department's renewed emphasis on the integrated prevention of harmful behaviors. OSIEs also heighten visibility of risk and protective factors impacting our installations and improve our chances of detecting and correcting of harmful behaviors before tragic incidents occur. Finally, OSIEs allow us to detect best practices and make them common practices, as well as identify where additional interventions or resources may be needed.

The inaugural OSIEs helped to establish a process, procedures, and data analyses that can be replicated in subsequent visits. The evaluations of 20 sites are now complete, and the 2021 OSIE Report includes findings from the on-site assessment, best practices and lessons learned, as well as actions the Department should undertake to improve and enhance our environments. Based on the 2021 OSIEs' helpful outcomes, Secretary Austin has determined that this effort will continue biennially.

#### *Suicide Prevention and Mental Health*

Every death by suicide is a tragedy and weighs heavily on the military community. The Department is steadfast in its commitment to suicide prevention, and the overall well-being of our servicemembers and their families. Suicide represents a complex interaction of psychological, biological, and environmental factors that vary among individuals. Because no two individuals are identical, our efforts seek to address a range of risk factors and enhance protective factors.

We are committed to addressing this issue, not only because it affects our missions, but more importantly because we have a moral responsibility care for people. Our public health approach focuses on reducing suicide risk for all servicemembers and their families by targeting the various underlying risk factors (such as relationship, financial, and mental health stressors), while also enhancing protective factors (such as social connections, coping skills, and safety in one's environment).

We are working to enhance holistic, data-driven suicide prevention, non-clinical policy, oversight, and engagement that address prevention across populations, and also clinical suicide prevention efforts with mental/behavioral health services. This approach enables us to address suicide comprehensively through a public health approach that leverages best practices, including from the Centers for Disease Control & Prevention. Our work incorporates community-based prevention efforts involving military leaders, family, peers, spouses, and chaplains.

One major challenge is the demand for mental health services is outpacing the supply of mental health professionals nationwide. Mental health concerns, and demand for mental health care, appear to have been exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic. DOD undertook rapid action to sustain mental health services, and continued to deliver care in a virtual environment, establishing Health Protection Condition linked guidance to standardize mental health operations during the COVID-19 response in order to protect providers, protect patients, and maintain routine care safely. We are working to develop a staffing model, which focuses on matching supply to demand, optimizing provider availability (supply) with the goal of treating 100 percent of Active Duty servicemembers (demand) in the Direct Care system. To those ends, the Uniformed Services University for Health Sciences currently offers three mental health related degree programs: PhD in Clinical Psychology, PhD in Medical Psychology, and Doctor of Nursing Practice (DNP) in Psychiatric Mental Health. To mitigate further challenges in supply, we continue to rely on the civilian network, aiming to provide care within the access to care standards for appointment wait time.

Pursuant to the fiscal year 2022 NDAA, Secretary Austin directed the creation of the Suicide Prevention and Response Independent Review Committee (SPRIRC) on March 22, 2022. The SPRIRC will conduct a comprehensive review of the Depart-

ment's efforts to prevent suicide, visit multiple installations, and conduct additional information gathering to strengthen our actions. The Secretary directed the SPRIRC to seek long-term positive effects across the military. This effort supports the Department's continued focus on prevention, including alignment with the recommendations from the Independent Review Commission on Sexual Assault.

Secretary Austin chose nine installations to ensure each Military Department is represented, and to increase our understanding of the needs of various geographies, including geographically isolated and OCONUS locations like Alaska, acknowledging recent challenges. The selection process was data-driven, and included feedback from the Services and the National Guard Bureau. Through this review, we will leverage outside experts to critically examine how we can improve our policies and programs to best support our military community. Their independent recommendations will help inform change across our force to prevent future tragedies.

The Department has the responsibility to support and protect those who defend our Country and their families, and we must do everything possible to prevent suicide in our military community. Towards this goal, we seek to encourage help-seeking behaviors, eliminate stigma, and enable access to mental health clinical services for our servicemembers and their families.

#### *Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Accessibility*

DOD has faced challenges in achieving desired diversity across the Total Force, particularly at leadership levels. Actions taken to date have not yet translated to the changes we desire. Additional steps are in progress to make improvements. To continue to improve, DOD is working to further to understand root causes in areas where we lack diversity, have measurable desired outcome metrics, maintain appropriate data to inform and target efforts, ensure environments are inclusive of all who serve, and have a strong governance structure to oversee these efforts.

Enhancing Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Accessibility (DEIA) across our Department maximizes our ability to recruit and retain top talent, and DOD strives to ensure DEIA underpins every aspect of our approach to talent management. To facilitate, inform, and advance agency progress on issues relating to DEIA, we established the DOD Equity Team (DET) in April 2021. The DET addressed a broad range of issues, including the need for increased diversity within the talent pipeline; challenges pertaining to DEIA data collection, analysis, and management; and integration of diversity and inclusion curriculum into leadership development training.

Furthermore, as part of President Biden's efforts, the Department carried multiple actions corresponding with DEIA-related executive actions from the White House. In accordance with Executive Order (EO) 13985 and EO 14035, and through the efforts of the DET, the Department evaluated external-facing programs and, in collaboration with the Domestic Policy Council, developed the DOD Equity Action Plan. DOD also looked at its internal practices for DEIA in its workforce culture, and is developing goals and objectives to advance DEIA. These accomplishments contributed to DOD's progress in the DEIA space.

While DOD is focused on these DEIA efforts to bring about long-term changes, the Department will also work to support the individual, interpersonal, and institutional factors that promote racial, ethnic, and gender diversity and inclusion in the military and eliminating any causal factors that prevent diversity or leads to discriminatory practices. We are taking steps to ensure our servicemembers and DOD civilian employees have an opportunity to achieve their professional goals based on merit, remove any barriers that prevent equal opportunity, and ensure a cohesive and ready force that reflects the diversity of our Nation.

#### SUPPORTING THE SUCCESSFUL TRANSITION FROM MILITARY

When citizens join our All-Volunteer Force, they offer their lives for a number of years. In exchange, when they return to civilian life at the end of their commitment, they should be more competitive in the economic marketplace. This is the "social compact," and when DOD lives up to it, through programs like tuition assistance, credentialing, and SkillBridge, American society reaps the benefits. About 200,000 servicemembers transition out of the military each year. The transition from military to civilian life—especially the 365-days prior to the 365-days post separation—is widely recognized as a challenging and stressful time for servicemembers and their families.

#### *Tuition Assistance / SkillBridge / Credentialing*

DOD's Tuition Assistance (TA) program provides servicemembers with financial assistance to enhance their academic achievement (i.e., earn a degree or certificate) during their off-duty time, which in turn improves job performance, promotion potential, self-development, personal quality of life, and overall readiness. While TA

is not specifically designed in support of the servicemembers' transition out of the military, it also provides ancillary benefit as an effective retention tool and supports their potential career after their service.

DOD's Credentialing, Apprenticeships (the United Services Military Apprenticeship Program—USMAP) and SkillBridge Employment Training programs exist on the spectrum of how military training, experience, and skills relate to increased mission readiness and ultimately result in successful post Active Duty careers. The demand for credentialing from servicemembers and industry continues to grow. Professional credentialing is an integral key of the Services' recruiting, in-service development, promotion, retention, and transition strategies. SkillBridge allows providers to sponsor a servicemember to participate in civilian training (certificate or non-traditional courses), apprenticeship, and internship programs, starting up to six months before separation.

#### *Transition Assistance Program*

Transition Assistance Program (TAP) delivery is a collaborative effort between DOD and the Military Services, Department of Labor, Department of Veterans Affairs (VA), and Small Business Administration; each with a primary area of responsibility and focus. However, the program succeeds due to a robust interagency collaboration and communications strategy that encompasses the four agencies listed above, and three additional agencies—Department of Homeland Security, Department of Education, and the U.S. Office of Personnel Management. Working together, these seven agencies and the Services provide consistent messaging and ensure collaboration and synchronization in the delivery of the program.

During TAP, all transitioning servicemembers complete a Military Occupational Code (MOC) crosswalk. They compare their military skills to civilian career opportunities and identify any gaps in education and training that they can then address to enhance civilian employability and marketability. Many transitioning servicemembers know that they want to pursue a specific course of education, a certain career field, or go into business for themselves. Others are undecided and could use more exploration and assistance in their career search. The MOC crosswalk is set up to help all transitioning servicemembers refine their goals.

TAP also addresses transition-related risks and barriers as part of the initial counseling with a personal self-assessment administered by the Services. The self-assessment indicates potential risk and levels of support required. If an assessment indicates the need or desire for follow-on support, the servicemember is connected via a warm handover to the appropriate agency or support organization for specialized assistance targeted the specific needs.

#### *DOD-VA Collaboration*

The DOD and VA relationship is stronger now than ever before, as both Departments leverage shared resources and interconnected processes to support servicemembers, Veterans and their families. This past year, we renewed our shared commitment to support publishing a five-year joint strategic plan focusing on healthcare, benefits and service delivery, job training, transition, and modernized business practices.

A goal within both Departments is to enhance the transition and post-separation experience of servicemembers. VA and DOD have designated the 365-days prior to transition through the 365-days post transition as the critical transition period. During this period, collaboration efforts will focus on a comprehensive, timely, and personalized approach to servicemember transition.

Additionally, a common undercurrent to joint DOD-VA work is the sharing of data and analytics between Departments. Through a recently signed DOD-VA Joint Data and Analytics Strategy the path is now set for VA and DOD to optimize data, and coordinate and share analytics. This will empower both agencies to make better decisions directly impacting servicemembers and Veterans.

Finally, The Federal Electronic Health Record Modernization (FEHRM) office has lead the DOD, VA, and other federal agencies in deploying a single, common federal electronic health record (EHR). This EHR allows DOD, VA, and other partners effectively deliver health care and benefits to more than 28 million eligible beneficiaries by bringing a common record to patients and providers. As of March 2022, there are more than 95,000 DOD, VA, and other federal EHR users (doctors, nurses, etc.) at 66 DOD Commands, three VA sites across 41 states, two U.S. territories, and one overseas location. More than 4.5 million unique patients are currently in the federal EHR system. There is recognition that the federal EHR saves providers time and enables more standard workflows to support enhanced clinical decision-making and patient safety. The federal EHR will continue to evolve as experiences with deploy-

ing and using the federal EHR drive lessons learned, best practices and enhancements moving forward.

#### CONCLUSION

There is a significant milestone ahead of us—we will be celebrating 50 years of All-Volunteer Force (AVF) in 2023. When this country eliminated the draft in 1973, we could not have imagined the success story of the AVF that has created the most educated, professional and capable military force in history. The Department has learned and applied many lessons in the past 50 years. As we look forward to the next 50, it is imperative that we do not take for granted what makes our U.S. Military unparalleled and unmatched. It is the people—the Active, Reserve, National Guard, DOD civilians, and all of their families who are willing to serve this country. All of us here today will not forget that as we do our jobs every day.

Thank you for your continued support of our servicemembers and their families, we look forward to your questions.

Senator GILLIBRAND. Thank you very much, Mr. Secretary. Secretary Cisneros, Section 1506 of the 2020 Defense—2022 Defense Bill requires you and the DOD Chief Information Officer to assess the feasibility and advisability of creating a national cyber academy to train future civilians and military personnel for Federal service in cyber information or related fields throughout the Federal Government.

The assessment must be completed by this fall. Do you believe that the national cyber academy would help us obtain for civilian or military service the cyber talent we need to meet national defense objectives over the next two decades?

While creating a national cyber academy is a long term enterprise, in the near term, what do you think of creating an RTC scholarship to serve as a program for civilian students throughout the Nation, partnering with appropriate colleges and universities in exchange for a civilian service commitment?

Mr. CISNEROS. Thank you for that question, Senator. You know, cyber is one of the areas that I know all the services, both on the civilian and the uniformed side, are—as I mentioned in my remarks, in a competitive, competing for talent, you know, with the private sector, we need more of these individuals. We are trying to recruit the best and the brightest. I have spoken with the Chief Information Officer.

They actually have led on this report. We are there to support them. But we think anything that we can do that will bring more people into Government service, hopefully within the Department of Defense as well—you know, we are looking at all opportunities and anything that we can do that would kind of help improve that and make it better.

Senator GILLIBRAND. Thank you. Ms. Foster, the Department of Military Service has continued to implement the recommendations of the President's Independent Review Commission on Sexual Assault in the Military, particularly those that address prevention, victim care, and command culture and climate. Most of these recommendations do not require legislation.

Nevertheless, we expect the Department to implement these recommendations as quickly as possible within—including within the Reserve components. Please provide us with an update on the Department's implementation and the timeline for expected completion.

Do you expect to implement every one of the IRC's recommendations, and if not, which are still under review?

Ms. FOSTER. Senator, thank you so much for that question. As you know, implementing all 82 IRC recommendations is a priority of Secretary Austin and all senior leadership at the Department of Defense. In the interest of time, I would like to provide a few highlights on the prevention work that we are doing and the response workforce.

So on the prevention workforce, as you know, one of the key recommendations of the IRC was to stand up a dedicated and specialized violence prevention workforce that would look at addressing not only sexual assault and harassment, but also suicide, domestic violence, child abuse.

So one of the things that we have done is established the prevention workforce model, which is essentially the infrastructure that will support this new workforce, which we are building from the ground up. When we look at this workforce, we have to think, where are these personnel going to be? What special skills will they possess to do their job? What kind of training and continuing education do they need?

What kind of credentials do they need to ensure that this is truly a professional and standardized workforce? So that is what we are doing on the prevention side. On the response side, we are working really closely with the services to redesign how we staff resource and professionalize our response workforce so that we can ensure that our victims are getting all of the care and support that they need.

That includes things like eliminating collateral duties so they can focus exclusively on this work. It means looking at taking this out of the chain of command so that there is no bias in the process. We are working very closely with the services on developing those workforce studies right now that will allow us to implement this.

I am happy to provide you additional information about other recommendations or your staff at another time.

Senator GILLIBRAND. Thank you very much. Dr. Smith, the Personnel Subcommittee recently held a hearing on suicide prevention and behavioral health issues. At that hearing, we heard from both DOD and outside expert witnesses about the shortage of behavioral health providers in DOD and in the Nation as a whole.

We continue to see increasing suicide rates in the services, and we hear from constituents about problems accessing behavioral health care, both for servicemembers and their families. This has become particularly acute during the pandemic. Dr. Smith, what can be done to increase access to behavioral health care?

What is DOD doing now and planning on doing in the future to address the shortage of behavioral health care needed by our military personnel and their families? We also continue to hear that some of—some do not avail themselves of behavioral health services because of the stigma attached seeking that type of health care. What is being done and what can be—more can be done to reduce stigma of seeking behavioral health?

Mr. SMITH. Thank you, Senator Gillibrand, for that question.  
[Technical problems.]

Mr. SMITH.—we are also adding psychiatric PAs, along with nurse practitioners and licensed mental health counselors, family and marriage therapists. We have also started reviewing all initial appointments to make sure that we are matching the needs of the individual to the right level of provider to make sure that they are not mismatched once they make their first appointment.

We have also, as I think you are aware, significantly increased total behavioral health and have a goal to increase another 63,500 visits over the next year. Now, tele-behavioral health is truly contingent on the consent of the individual and that the provider thinks that is the right modality.

But we think that that is going to help increase availability. I will point out that most of our Military Treatment Facilities (MTFs) meet the access to care standards that we have set. Actually, internally, we have a standard of 15 days. Most are aware of the 28 day, but on average, across the system, we are running at about 13.6 days.

But there are clearly exceptions that occur on a monthly basis at various locations, and that is part of where we hope the staffing model will help on that. You mentioned the issue of stigma. We are working with PNR and the rest of the Department to look at all of our instructions to make sure that we review them and remove any stigmatizing language that may be in them.

I hope the fact that there is an increasing demand signal for behavioral health is an indication that some of our efforts are actually working. But I might defer to some of my other colleagues to see if there are additional issues to add to that.

Mr. CISNEROS. Senator, I will just add on the stigma. That is something that we have really been focusing on.

The Deputy Secretary holds the DWC, the Deputy Workforce Council, where this has definitely been a topic that has come up for discussion, where, you know, we are trying to convince Commanders and everyone not to overreact when somebody comes up with a problem that—[technical problems]—says, you know, hey, I need help, I need support. That is not a reason to take away their security clearance.

So we have been discussing this all. All the services are on board. It is something that we are working towards to really kind of get it out there to really just destigmatize it and really mean what we say, is like mental health is health, and that people should have the support to come forward when they need to discuss their mental health.

Senator TILLIS. Thank you, Senator Gillibrand. Again, thank you all for being here. Ms. Foster, and Secretary Cisneros and I spoke about this in my office yesterday, with the IRC recommend—the implementation, you know, originally it was a shorter timeline, and Senator Gillibrand was gracious to have a two year implementation timeline. But in each of the service lines, this is going to be a complex process.

I know, Secretary Cisneros, I believe you said that you would be having a program office, or a program plan more or less put in place over the next month or so. It is less of a question and more of an encouragement that as you get that plan together, I think it would be important to report back to this committee your progress

and any of the milestones that are slipping to the right and the reasons why, so that we don't have to be reactive when you come before the committee and report that maybe you have ran into a few challenges for making the timeline, and then what more we can do to potentially facilitate any of the problems or challenges you may be running into.

Ms. FOSTER. Senator, absolutely. We would be more than happy to engage with you on this. As you said, it is quite complex. We are implementing 82 recommendations that cover sort of the full spectrum of the Department. But I think what we have done is we have built accountability and evaluation into the process to ensure precisely what you describe that we don't fall off track.

One of the ways in which we have done that is we are building an Outcome Metrics Evaluation Report, which will allow the Department to track progress on each of those recommendations, recognizing that for some of those recommendations, there is—you know, it is not just done, not done. There are many data points along the way.

What we are doing with that report is that will then come forward to the Deputy's Workforce Council, which is chaired by the Deputy Secretary of Defense and the Vice Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff.

That will come forward to that group on a quarterly basis. And anywhere that we are falling behind, anywhere where it looks like we are off track, that gives the senior leadership of the Department an opportunity to engage with all of the services and say, hey, what is happening here? Why aren't we making progress?

Do you need additional resources? Do you need additional authorities? I think we would welcome having that conversation with Congress as well. You have been critical partners for us on this, and so we would like to continue that conversation.

Senator TILLIS. Thank you. Secretary Cisneros, the DOD Equity Action Plan that was issued a few weeks ago. Can you give me an idea of what specific programs or actions are going to follow as a result of that action plan?

Mr. CISNEROS. Thank you for that, Senator. Look, I think that we want to ensure that everybody has opportunity, regardless of their sexual—gender, the color of their skin, that they are able to given an opportunity within the Department of Defense to achieve and to succeed, and also to do this within our DOD schools as well, to celebrate the diversity of our families, of our servicemembers and their families that serve in the Department of Defense to make sure that we celebrate the many cultures that make up the Department.

But our equity plan is really about making sure that there is opportunity for those that want it and to go out there and going to work to achieve it, and really creating that environment where we celebrate the diversity of our force and that we are getting out there to ensure that we know a diverse and integrated force is going to be stronger warfighting.

Senator TILLIS. I understand the objection—objective. I think it is laudable. But I am getting more into the implementation. I mean, would—could we foresee quotas, or I mean, how exactly would you implement this?

Mr. CISNEROS. No, sir. We have no quotas. There is no idea or thought of quotas. Again, when I say it is about creating opportunity to make sure that everybody has a fair shake and that everybody is given the same opportunity to succeed. That is really what we are going after, and that is what I have always talked about what diversity is. Diversity is about creating opportunity, and that is what I am working towards within the Department of Defense as we move forward with this.

Senator TILLIS. Okay. Thank you, Dr. Smith. I had this discussion with Secretary Cisneros in my office yesterday. I think we have got an inherent conflict when we talk about removing the stigma. On the one hand, we are rightfully asking men and women to come forward, seek help and provision care to them.

On the other hand, and you have heard me state my concern for some of the inflows of potential recruits, you have a potential recruit come in who may have at some point in time prior to seeking a career in the armed services have behavioral health challenges, maybe anxiety or been administered drugs. It is my understanding right now that is a disqualifying event. Is that true?

Mr. SMITH. Thank you for the question, Senator. It depends on—[technical problems]—we certainly allow folks who have had issues in the past, into the services. If they are on medications, we require, in certain areas—[technical problems]—on those medications. But I can certainly provide for the record more detail.

Senator TILLIS. Yes, I would appreciate that. I just, you know, I am just wanting to make sure we have consistency over the life cycle, from the point in time somebody is considering entering the service to the point in time somebody exits and transitions to veteran status. I think those are just slight turning of the dial that would be helpful for the overall challenge that we have with removing the stigma and making sure people get the treatment that they need.

Mister, or Secretary Cisneros, if I get a chance, I wanted to go back to a discussion we had about childcare. But we have two members here. I may have an opportunity in another round. Senator Warren.

Senator WARREN. Thank you very much. So we are here to discuss the Pentagon's budget request for personnel costs. In other words, the part of the budget that pays for the people who make our military run, and some of those people are Federal employees, but some of those people are contractors.

Now, studies have shown that outsourcing can result in the Pentagon paying double or even triple what we pay for Federal employees to do the same job. The Defense Business Board recommended cutting those contracts to help the Department save \$125 billion. Now, contractors are always going to be part of our defense workforce. But making good decisions about when to outsource requires good data.

Secretary Cisneros, your office is required by Federal law to help track data on the cost of contractors used by the Pentagon. So let me just start with the basics, how many contractors work for the Department of Defense?



Mr. CISNEROS. Senator, thank you for that. But regrettably, I do not have that information with me, but I can take that for the record on the number of contractors that we have on.

Senator WARREN. Is it a publicly available piece of information?

Mr. CISNEROS. That I am not sure of, ma'am. I would have to get back to you on—

Senator WARREN. Well, let me put it this way. I can't find it, and I looked hard on your website. I called people. I tried to figure this out, and I think that is the problem. The law explicitly requires your office to develop guidance to track this information.

I don't know how we can justify the kind of spending the Pentagon asks for if we don't even know basic things like how many people we have on contract and make that number publicly available to all of us. There is no doubt that you are required to collect it. I would just like to see it and see it reported.

Now, we also know that it can be incredibly expensive when the Department outsources its work for services like administrative support, for food services, for deployed troops, for weapons maintenance, or even for management consulting. The costs for these have grown enormously over the past 20 years.

So that last year the Department spent \$214 billion on service contracting. One of the big ways that the Department estimates future costs is through five year spending plans that lay out expectations for how much different parts of the Pentagon are going to need in various areas.

So, Secretary Cisneros, how much does the Department expect to spend on service contracts over the next 5 years?

Mr. CISNEROS. Senator, it is my understanding that we don't project contractor costs the way that we do with our military and civilian workforce requirements. However, we must take a, I believe you are right, a total force approach and kind of looked at contracted services. I can commit that I will take this concern back to the Comptroller and the COOP to make sure that it is addressed.

Senator WARREN. Well, I appreciate your doing that. You know, it shouldn't take somebody asking this question. This should just be part of the planning that is already baked in. We can't have good planning if we are not looking at long term costs. I got to say, 5 years doesn't seem like hugely long term, but at least a start in the right direction.

I think the taxpayers, and those of us who do oversight, should know how much money the Pentagon expects to spend on costly areas of the budget. I think this committee should know that, and I am going to be following up on requests for information. I appreciate your willingness to bring this forward.

Look, we have a defense industry where these contractors have a long history of lining their pockets at taxpayer expense, and if we are not collecting the data and making smart decisions, then we are going to just continue to see runaway spending without more effectiveness in making our military work. So, thank you very much.

Senator TILLIS. Secretary Cisneros, if you are able to provide that information, I think it would be interesting to stratify between sort of ongoing long term positions, project oriented special serv-

ices, things that are unique to a specific project or outcome that roll over. I think that is a better way to look at it because, one, you can understand that we continue to be contracted. The other one, you can look at whether or not that is a valid basis for bringing it inside. Senator Hawley.

Senator HAWLEY. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Dr. Smith, can I start with you? Earlier this week, the Veterans Administration (VA) announced that it would presume service connection for nine respiratory cancers that were resulting from or potentially connected to burn pit exposure. This committee, as you may know, held a hearing on this topic back in March.

Can you give me the DOD's estimate for the number of individuals who would qualify for the presumption of service, really the connection? Do you have any sense of that?

Mr. SMITH. Thank you for the question. I do not—oh, thank you, sorry. I do not have an actual number. I know that the definition is rare, means 6 per 100,000, I believe. But I would have to come back, and yes, they did. It is nine conditions related to high particulate matter and—

Senator HAWLEY. That brings the total, that the VA has now designated as presumed service connection, to what?

Mr. SMITH. Twelve, I believe, relative to particulate matter. Sinusitis, rhinitis and asthma was also made presumptive, I want to say, 3 months or so ago.

Senator HAWLEY. Okay. Could you come back to me on the numbers such as you—or could you look into that and get back to me for the record?

Mr. SMITH. The idea would be for us to predict what we think the numbers would be—

Senator HAWLEY. Yes, given the likely exposure since 2001, give me some sense of the scope, the universe that we are looking at here.

Mr. SMITH. Yes, sir.

Senator HAWLEY. Great, thank you. Ms. Penrod, shifting to you. This committee heard earlier this month testimony relating to the tragedy of servicemember suicide. I know the Department has been attentive to this, but the Government Accountability Office (GAO) has reported a statistically significant increase, I am sure you know, in Active component suicide from 2015 to 2020. That is true across all of the services. Let me just ask for your view about why this issue persists, despite DOD's attempts to address it?

Senator WARREN. Senator, I am going to defer to Ms. Foster—

Senator HAWLEY. That is fine. Go ahead. Sure, go ahead, Ms. Foster.

Ms. FOSTER. Senator, thank you so much for the question, and let me just say, first off, that these are tragedies that have absolutely no place in our in our force, and we need to continue our concerted efforts to get after this. I think the reason that this issue continues to persist is suicide is the result of a number of different complex factors, so psychological, environmental, social, behavioral.

As a result of that, there is no one single fix that we can have to address this, and, you know, this is not just a problem within the Department of Defense. It is a problem within the civilian community as well. But we are taking a public health approach to ur-

gently get after this issue, and we are doing that through a few different ways.

One of the ways in which I will highlight is, we are standing up a dedicated and specialized violence prevention workforce that is intended to address those risk factors that we see that exacerbate this issue and enhance some of the protective factors that are critical to getting after this.

Senator HAWLEY. Got it. Thank you. That is helpful. What do you think, in your view, the weak points are in the Department's current efforts to address this issue?

Ms. FOSTER. Senator, I think that the science is evolving rapidly on this issue, and so we are following the emerging science and data on this, to address this, and taking that integrated primary prevention and public health approach to this issue. We absolutely have more work to do, but we are moving quickly to take these steps.

Senator HAWLEY. Well, I am sure we will be talking more about this. I mean, it is a huge problem, as you say. It is unfortunately a growing problem. It does span both the civilian and the military worlds, the service worlds, and it is clearly something that we need to address in both of those contexts.

So, I look forward to working with you more on that. Mr. Cisneros—Mr. Secretary, if I could just shift you in my remaining moments here. As you might imagine, I have received a lot of communication from constituents who are concerned about military discharges as a result of the COVID-19 vaccine mandate.

Can you tell me how many servicemembers, within each individual service and across them, have been discharged as a result of the vaccine mandate?

Mr. CISNEROS. Thank you for that question, Senator. You know, ensuring that all our servicemembers are ready and able to deploy and be part of our fighting force is an important thing, and I know it is important to the Secretary and a requirement that he has made.

In regards to the number of people that have been discharged because of the COVID vaccine, I do not have that exact number with me today, but that is something I can take back for the record.

Senator HAWLEY. Great. Thank you very much. Can you also find out what percentage across and within each service were issued as a general discharge under honorable conditions rather than an honorable discharge? Can you find that out for me?

Mr. CISNEROS. I can look into that, Senator.

Senator HAWLEY. Okay, great, and maybe you can tell me this, how does the Department evaluate the character of the discharge resulting from the vaccination requirement?

Mr. CISNEROS. Well, right now, Senator, those that are being discharged, if anyone is being discharged because of refusal to take the vaccine, they are getting a, either it is an honorable or the next level below that. That was dictated by the last NDAA that we followed, and so that is what we have been doing.

Senator HAWLEY. How do you distinguish, though, between those two categories?

Mr. CISNEROS. That, sir, is up to the services. They process the discharges. They are the ones who make the decision on the indi-

vidual basis as to what is going on and why it is an honorable or why it is not an honorable discharge.

Senator HAWLEY. But surely, given that this is a very widespread issue, and the numbers are pretty large, there are some uniform criteria, I would think.

Mr. CISNEROS. Sir, we have our—we do. We have our policy, the same policy for waivers and for whether it be medical or for religious waivers. That has been in place for a while now, and that is the policy that we have gone to the services and told them to make sure that they are following these procedures. You know, with that, I think Ms. Penrod can kind of give you a little bit more detail on that.

Ms. PENROD. Sir, as with any discharge, a service will look at the conditions around that discharge. So it is not always straightforward. It could be other circumstances with an individual case, and that is why we need to—it would be the services who would have to answer that, why they would have a certain number of honorable versus general discharges.

Senator HAWLEY. But am I right in thinking that when it comes to this issue, I mean this distinction between an honorable discharge or the general discharge under honorable conditions, whereas it relates to COVID-19, there is some set of uniform criteria that are governing these decisions, right? I understand that you have to make a case by case evaluation, but there are a lot of these cases that are presenting the same basic sets of facts.

Ms. PENROD. Yes, but the services are looking at each case individually. So they—that is what they do. They review these cases, and they look at all the circumstances of the cases. That is not something we would be able to do at our level.

Senator HAWLEY. Well, I understand that. I am just trying to get the information. So I understand—listen, I am a lawyer. I mean, we assess—the courts assess cases on a case by case basis. That is what litigation means. But you do it according to a standard rule. You don't just make it up as you go along. I want to know what the rule is, what the criteria—does that make sense?

Mr. CISNEROS. Yes, sir, and we do. We do have procedures in place that have been there that govern the waivers, and then, as far as—too, as far as discharges go, there are procedures in place and instructions that guide that. That is kind of what the services are following.

Senator HAWLEY. Can you give me that information?

Ms. PENROD. Sir, if I may. Sir, so it is really a two-step process. If it is a religious accommodation, for example. It is the—up to the Department to determine whether or not that is a sincerely held belief. In most cases that is being passed. The individuals that have a religious reason for not having the vaccine, that is clearly passed.

The next step is, what is the impact to the health and welfare of the service? Is there a safety issue? That is the next standard that they look at. For the services, that is the standard that causes the concern, for the safety and welfare of the service, and so those are the standards.

Those are clear in policy. The procedures themselves are different by service, and that is what we are reviewing currently.

Senator HAWLEY. Got it. Thank you.

Senator TUBERVILLE. Yes, thank you. I don't have any other questions since mine has already been asked and answered. But I will say this, my office—I have got five military bases in my State.

My office has been overwhelmed with phone calls and letters, and some of these letters that I read are—I mean, break your heart about religious and health related problems. I would say is as Senator Hawley said, you know, we need to get some kind of relief from this. We need to get somebody some answers so we can give our people answers because it is all up in the air.

People don't like their questions not answered, especially when it is their livelihood. So I would appreciate the same information you are going to—Secretary, for Senator Hawley, and so we can pass that on to our constituents. Thank you very much.

Mr. CISNEROS. Thank you. We can provide that, Senator.

Senator GILLIBRAND. Thank you. Both of you have an opportunity for a second round, if you have more questions. I am going to just ask one. Just last week, the Army unveiled an expansive set of new policies aimed to create one of the most consequential sets of quality of life improvements ever for military parents, including expanded leave and making it easier for pregnant soldiers to continue their careers.

This new policy includes a 12 month exemption from onerous military requirements such as postpartum body composition, physical fitness testing, postpartum dress uniforms, deferment from training and deployments, among other things. This new policy also authorizes up to 42 days of convalescence leave after pregnancy loss and authorizes parental leave for birth parents in the Army Reserve and Army National Guard.

Secretary Cisneros and Ms. Penrod, what is your view on this newly announced Army policy, and when you consider requiring the other services to adopt a similar policy?

Mr. CISNEROS. Senator, I think that when I saw the message that they were coming out with this, I thought it was great, and I think it is something that we definitely encourage. You know, each service is different, each services is trying different things.

I know the Navy for a while has granted leaves of absence where servicemembers could take time off, I think up to like 2 years, you know, from Active Duty and then come back after that. But we are for supporting anything that is going to allow—you know, improve our quality of life of our servicemembers and to make it better for them and to make it more family oriented for them.

Ms. PENROD. Yes, Senator, thank you. What we do is when a service announces a policy—it is a very generous policy, and again, we look at the support it provides the family. We will then—we always work and meet with the other services and look at, well, how would you do this? You know, what are the constraints for you to implement the same? As Mr. Cisneros said, each culture is different.

How would that impact readiness and mission of the service? So this is something I think that each individual service can speak to. But yes, when we see a great policy or something that helps our servicemembers, we absolutely look at how can we expand that to the other services.

But once we have that information, if it looks like something that all services can support, we usually do put that in policy, you know, we will try to put that in policy.

Senator GILLIBRAND. Great, and just one question for Dr. Smith. This is something that Senator Tillis and I have worked on. Last year's NDAA contained a provision requiring independent analysis of recent changes to the autism care demonstration program after families and providers reported a myriad of concerns and disruptions in care.

What is the status of the NASCM analysis? What—will the analysis be complete before the end of the ACD on January 1, 2024? What will happen to the beneficiary services when the ACD ends on January 1, 2024?

[Technical problems.]

Mr. SMITH.—we at least support, and think is very reasonable to do. It is supposed to be—we are—we want it to be done clearly before the end of the demonstration. Relative to what will happen at the end of the demonstration, that is still internal discussions, and a decision has not been made on that. So I hope that answers your question.

Senator GILLIBRAND. Any additional questions? Go ahead, Senator Hawley.

Senator HAWLEY. Just one more. Back to the vaccination issue. Prior to last year's NDAA, and you referenced the change in discharge status and decisions that we legislated. Prior to that enactment, how many servicemembers do you know were dishonorably discharged because they were unwilling to get the COVID-19 vaccination?

Mr. CISNEROS. Senator, I don't have that number in front of me right now, and we can get that for the record too. That may be a better question for the services when the next round as well.

Senator HAWLEY. You will get it for me, though?

Mr. CISNEROS. I will get it for you.

Senator GILLIBRAND. Thank you. Thank you to our panel. Your testimony is extremely helpful, and if you want to supplement it in any way, you have about a week to do so. Thank you so much. We invite the second panel up. Welcome to our second panel. I will just invite you in order of your seating. So, Lieutenant General Brito, you are first. If you would like to start us off.

**STATEMENT OF LIEUTENANT GENERAL GARY BRITO, USA,  
DEPUTY CHIEF OF STAFF, G-1 UNITED STATES ARMY**

Lieutenant General BRITO. Good afternoon, Chairman Gillibrand, Ranking Member Tillis, distinguished Members of the Committee. Thank you for the opportunity to appear before you on behalf of the men and women of the United States Army. I have submitted a statement for the record, and I would like to highlight a few points from it now. The Army's number one priority is his people, our soldiers and Army civilians, families and veterans soldiers for life. Nothing is more important for our combat readiness.

Our personnel programs and initiatives are focused on promoting a culture of cohesiveness, dignity, and respect, and within a safe environment where every individual can advance as far as their talents and skills and desires will take them. Talent management

initiatives, modernization programs, and policy are transforming the Army's personnel systems. Ongoing 21st century talent management initiatives and actions help us attract, acquire, and retain a diverse and talented force from across the Nation.

Our nearly 280,000 Army civilians are an integral part of the Army team, providing unmatched talent in critical areas. To further support them, we have expanded professional development and educational opportunities, have extended our sharp services to all Army civilians as well. Personnel readiness—personnel readiness also means creating an installation and environment that allows our soldiers and their families to thrive.

The Army is committed to quality of life priorities that include quality housing, barracks, childcare, youth services, and meaningful employment for our spouses. Resiliency programs and initiatives aimed at harmful behaviors and supported by Congress are critical to help us combat sexual harassment, sexual assault, and factors that contribute to suicide.

The Army's SHARP and suicide prevention training curriculum have both been updated. In addition, the Behavioral Health Pulse tool was fielded the last year to provide leaders visibility over many facets of behavioral health. Other initiatives, such as fatality review boards, support from our cohesive assessment team, improve leader training and more, are helping to address the issue of suicide across the total Army.

The Army Soldier for Life program continues to support soldiers, veterans, and their families. The retired soldiers are important to the Army family. Soldier for Life is working to ensure that States and territories are aware of inbound transitioning soldiers and their families. The people of the United States Army, these men and women who serve our Nation both in and out of uniform, along with their families, are our strength and what makes our Army great.

A diverse, talented, strong, healthy, and resilient force is a most important indicator of our overall combat readiness. Putting our people first, as a priority and a philosophy, will continue to drive everything we do and contribute to the quality of life and combat readiness.

Chairwoman Gillibrand, Ranking Member Tillis, and Members of the Committee, I thank you for your generous and unwavering support of our talented soldiers, civilian professionals, and their families, and I look forward to your questions. Thank you, ma'am.

[The prepared statement of Lieutenant General Gary Brito follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT BY LIEUTENANT GENERAL GARY BRITO

Chairwoman Gillibrand, Ranking Member Tillis, distinguished Members of this Committee, thank you for the opportunity to appear before you 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 veteran Soldiers for Life—and their contribution to combat readiness. All of the Army's personnel programs and initiatives are focused on taking care of our people. Every individual can serve honorably and advance professionally, within a culture that promotes cohesiveness, dignity and respect, within a safe environment for those serving and their families. There is no better investment to ensure the readiness of the Army. We continue to focus on the Army People Strategy's mission

and vision to acquire, develop, employ, and retain the diversity of soldier and civilian talent needed to achieve Total Army readiness.

#### TAKING CARE OF OUR PEOPLE

For the Army, “People First” means we develop and implement programs designed to keep our people safe and provide them with the quality of life they deserve. It also means we foster positive command climates and a culture that values trust, diversity, and inclusion, and that we work to reduce harmful behaviors in our ranks.

##### *The People First Task Force*

The People First Task Force (PFTF) continues to assess organizational culture through the employment of the Cohesion Assessment Team (CAT) in order to further build disciplined, cohesive, lethal, and fit teams at brigade and below level. To date, the CAT has conducted five Active Duty unit assessments and an additional two survey-only assessments. This intensive in-person assessment team analyzes existing Army metrics, digital survey results, focus groups, extensive leader interviews and observations in order to provide leaders actionable results that empower them to operationalize People First within their formation. On March 9th, the Under Secretary of the Army made the decision to institutionalize the capability for the Army and assigned it within the Training and Doctrine Command. This move enables the Army to capture lessons learned and incorporate them into our leadership doctrine.

##### *Equity and Inclusion Efforts*

The Army continues to advance the Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Annex to the Army People Strategy, which includes five goals, 25 objectives, and 126 action tasks that serve as the core of the Army’s Project Inclusion initiatives and fulfill the Fiscal Year 2020 National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA), section 529 mandate for the military services to develop a diversity and inclusion strategic plan. The Annex’s five goals center on Leader Commitment, Talent Management, Organizational Structure, Training and Education, and Equitable and Inclusive Environment.

One of the Army’s major initiatives is the Your Voice Matters listening sessions where the Army sends diversity and inclusion professionals to installations to discuss race, racism, diversity and inclusion, and their impact on the force. As of March 28, 2022, the Army has conducted 204 listening sessions at 28 different locations, reaching more than 10,000 soldiers and Army civilians.

In accordance with Executive Order 14035, the Army Outreach and Engagement Strategy and Plan ensures viable collaboration and partnership with National Special Emphasis and Affinity Groups that represent underserved communities for access and opportunity in employment, training, professional development, recruitment and military service. Annually, the Army has partnered with several Non-Federal Agencies and has recently renewed its relationship with the League of United Latin American Citizens. This relationship similar to other groups will create opportunities for the Army to provide access and reach an important cohort of talent. These affinity groups are the foundation by which the Army will attain diversity and inclusion.

The Army has also infused diversity, equity, and inclusion training into Army Professional Military Education (PME). The Army’s Training and Doctrine Command has updated Military Equal Opportunity training to include diversity, equity, an inclusion, and the Secretary of the Army and the Chief of Staff of the Army signed the Officer Diversity Plan on January 7, 2021. Plans for our enlisted, warrant officer, and civilian cohorts will be available by the end of fiscal year 2022. These plans are designed to help the Army attract, acquire, develop, employ, and retain the diverse talent it needs to fight and win our Nation’s wars. The Army has also assigned a Senior Diversity Advisor to the Secretary of the Army, in compliance with fiscal year 2021 NDAA, section 913.

##### *Quality of Life Programs*

The Army remains committed to providing quality of life programs that support readiness by providing a positive experience for soldiers and families, to include: safe, well-maintained family and unaccompanied housing; quality, affordable childcare, and youth services programs; and meaningful employment and educational opportunities for spouses.

The Army continues to execute the Housing Campaign Plan to shape policies, processes, and procedures at every echelon. Based on our work with the Military Housing Privatization Initiative (MHPI) companies that own and operate Army’s privatized housing projects, we have fully implemented all 18 Tenant rights at our 44 Army installations with privatized housing, consistent with section 2890 of title 10, United States Code, and the revised MHPI Tenant Bill of Rights that the De-



partment issued on August 1, 2021. Our progress implementing the Tenant Bill of Rights represents a foundational step in the Army's ongoing efforts to rebuild trust and ensure a positive living experience for military members and their families, and increases their negotiating power with the MHPI companies. We expect to release the final results of the fiscal year 2022 Tenant Satisfaction Survey for Army's privatized housing and government family housing units by early May 2022, which will help inform plans for near-term and future improvements to housing, and be considered as part of the performance criteria for the MHPI companies.

The Army has completed a pilot third-party inspection of 90 percent (1,879) of Fort Belvoir's 2,078 privatized family homes. At least one maintenance requirement was identified in 92.7 percent of homes inspected. The results of this pilot inspection helped inform the Department of Defense (DoD) Uniform Housing Standard and inspection requirement that was issued in January 2021. We also have implemented a Housing Environmental Hazard Response Registry for military members and their families living in privatized or government-owned or leased housing, with 507 families registered as of 31 March 2022. This count is for the Army and sister Services. In addition, the Army has hired 114 additional government personnel to provide increased quality assurance oversight of our privatized and government-owned housing and serve as resident advocates. We are currently conducting a manpower study with an estimated completion date for end of 3rd Quarter, fiscal year 2022 to assess and determine Army housing personnel requirements and ensure correct authorizations are determined. Further, in fiscal year 2022, the Army implemented the Housing Certificate Program for 900 housing professionals to create a highly-skilled, multi-dimensional workforce recognized as housing management experts by the people they serve and within the housing industry at large.

Child development center projects are a quality of life investment priority. We appreciate Congress funding three child development centers in fiscal year 2021 (in Hawaii and Alaska) and two centers in fiscal year 2022 (in Kansas and Kentucky). We evaluated the additional need and locations for child care and are planning for seven child development center projects by fiscal year 2027—a potential \$120 million investment. We are also making significant investment in facilities sustainment, restoration, and modernization to ensure child development center continuity of service. Additionally, we continue to invest in Army fee assistance to buy down the cost of off-post care when on-post care is unavailable or there is an extended wait for care. Child care staffing continues to be a challenge and we face tremendous competition with a public labor market, such as warehousing and fast food, offering higher wages and substantial recruitment benefits without the requirements related to providing child care. To help with recruitment and retention, we have increased compensation, are offering recruitment and retention bonuses adjusted for the cost of living, and are hosting enterprise-wide virtual hiring events.

There are more than 420,000 Army spouses who play an essential role in readiness and retention. When spouses are satisfied with their career, employment options, and overall quality of life, they are likely to support their soldier's continued service. We continue to strengthen efforts to support spouse employment including reimbursing up to \$1,000 for professional licensing and certification in a new state. More than 436 reimbursements have been paid since the inception of the program in May 2019, totaling more than \$177,000. We are also investing in the Employment Readiness Program to help spouses find and maintain employment by hiring 31 additional staff across Army installations. Finally, we continue to work with the DoD to improve state license reciprocity and professional license compacts.

#### *Sexual Harassment/Assault Response and Prevention Program (SHARP)*

The Army continues to prioritize the prevention and response to sexual harassment and assault. At the direction of the President, on February 26, 2021, the Secretary of Defense established the 90-Day Independent Review Commission (IRC) on Sexual Assault in the Military. The Commission conducted an independent, impartial assessment of the military's policies and programs to prevent and respond to sexual violence. The IRC made more than 80 recommendations across four lines of effort: accountability, prevention, climate and culture, and victim care and support. The DoD and the Army are using a tiered approach to implementation and many of the Tier 1 and Tier 2 recommendations are already ongoing or will begin this calendar year. Our initial focus will be to build on our existing foundations to improve training, leader development, and program infrastructure. Not only will these efforts transform the SHARP program, they will transform the Army.

Major undertakings include establishing a full-time prevention workforce; providing additional independence from the chain of command for Sexual Assault Response Coordinators (SARCs) and Victim Advocates; and eliminating most collateral duty SARCs and Victim Advocates. We will further professionalize, strengthen, and

resource the SHARP workforce by establishing career development tracks, as well as improved training for culturally competent victim care for men, communities of color, LGBTQ+ soldiers, and religious minorities.

Several of the IRC recommendations align with current Army SHARP initiatives and programs. The Army already provides SARC and Victim Advocates services to victims of sexual harassment, which the IRC recommended be a practice extended across all Services. The Army is the only Service that has a SHARP Academy to train SHARP professionals and develop standardized training and curriculum materials to educate the force about sexual harassment and sexual assault within the context of our core values.

In addition to our efforts to thoughtfully work through the IRC recommendations to ensure effective execution and competent, compassionate victim-centric services, we have implemented several other changes to enhance our support to soldiers, Army civilians, and family members.

Building on these efforts, the Army is well under way to implementing the most significant change to military justice in 70 years, as directed in the fiscal year 2022 NDAA, with the establishment of the new Office of Special Trial Counsel. This office, staffed by experienced criminal litigators and led by a general officer, will replace commanders as the disposition authority for all sexual assault, domestic violence, child abuse, homicide and related offenses. Complementing these efforts, the Army will establish a criminal litigation career model increasing our ability to grow, identify, and staff experienced criminal litigation positions in both the prosecution and defense.

#### *New Prevention Initiatives*

Findings from the IRC on Sexual Assault in the Military demonstrated a lack of true primary prevention capability within the DoD. In accordance with the IRC recommendations, the Services are required to determine the full-time prevention workforce needed to ensure a dedicated primary prevention capability. To prevent harmful behaviors, the Army is focusing on upstream approaches, such as bolstering the social determinants of health and cultivating protective environments, while connecting individuals with appropriate Army resources and services.

In accordance with DoD guidance, a dedicated Integrated Prevention Workforce will implement and evaluate evidence-based primary prevention activities across the socio-ecological model. Using research from academia and industry, we intend to establish an ongoing, iterative process to seek input from internal and external prevention experts on the Army's prevention system and activities.

The DoD released the report on the findings of the Army's participation in the Secretary of Defense's On-Site Installation Evaluation (OSIE) initiative visits on March 31, 2022. The OSIE visits were conducted from June 2021 to January 2022. The visits were a part of a pilot of new evaluation process and metrics to improve prevention efforts.

The OSIE evaluation process is designed to impart a better understanding of both risk and protective factors on the ground, such as command climate. Army units selected for the DoD OSIE evaluation included: Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson; Ft. Bliss; Ft. Polk; Germany (various locations); and Fraser, Michigan (U.S. Army Reserve (USAR)). The units were selected for site visits based on their policy compliance self-assessments, Defense Organizational Climate Survey results, and the ability to effectively address risk for sexual assault, harassment, suicide, and other harmful behaviors.

The report generally found compliance with sexual assault and sexual harassment reporting and response requirements, but identified gaps for some units in prevention capabilities at the ground level to include elevated protective or risk factors for each unit evaluated. As a result, U.S. Army Garrison Ansbach, Germany; Fort Polk, Louisiana; and U.S. Army Garrison Rheinland-Pfalz, Germany, were identified as installations with the highest risk factors.

To address issues identified from the report, senior commanders at each installation are formulating action plans, to include prevention training, tailored for their locations.

Additionally, the Office of the Secretary of Defense has recommended follow-up site visits for U.S. Army Garrison Germany locations to assess implementation of recommendations from the OSIE site visits. Future OSIE reports will be released on a biennial basis.

In addition, the Secretary of the Army published a directive that requires all Army leaders at the squad level and above—to include Army civilians—to receive additional training on newly-published DoD policies and other information they need to know to effectively execute their responsibilities with regard to the SHARP Program. The Army SHARP Academy also revised the Army's SHARP Annual Re-

fresh Training to better enable unit leaders to deliver the training in small groups. The Academy is currently revising the Basic Leader's Course SHARP lesson to include new prevention-focused content. In this way, we enable soldiers' first-line leaders to help our youngest at-risk soldiers. The completed lesson is projected for release in 3rd quarter, fiscal year 2022.

#### *Ready and Resilient Program*

The Army's Ready and Resilient, or R2, program provides training and education resources to soldiers, family members, and Army civilians through the Army's 32 R2 Performance Centers.

Through the R2 program, we establish the foundation for individuals to build and sustain personal readiness and resilience. Resilience is a key element in the Army's primary prevention efforts as military and civilian studies show it is a protective factor against harmful behaviors.

In addition to the numerous resilience-focused offerings through our 32 Ready and Resilient Performance Centers (R2PCs) across the Army, we have conducted multiple pilots of mindfulness training to examine the effects of mindfulness practice for soldiers, teams, and spouses. We are developing mindfulness curriculum and implementation plans to ensure this impactful practice is available to unit commanders and soldiers throughout our Total Army. Our vision is for mindfulness to not only be a stand-alone

practice, but also integrated into our current portfolio of resilience skills. Along these lines, we intend to embed the training and education into the existing structure provided by the R2PCs. We will further operationalize mindfulness through integration into PME.

We continue to enhance leader visibility of their soldiers by expanding access to the Commander's Risk Reduction Toolkit (CRRT). The toolkit is a web-based application, populated from 26 authoritative data sources and displays up to 40 risk factors to give Command Teams a consolidated history of each soldier's personal information and potential risk. Only Battalion Commanders, Command Sergeants Major, Company Commanders, and First Sergeants are able to view individual soldier risk related to Personal Identifying Information and limited Protected Health Information. This tool provides leaders with a common operating picture consisting of high-risk event trends with relationship to operational events. During the past year, we completed fielding CRRT to the Active Component (AC) and USAR, and began rolling out the capability to the Army National Guard (ARNG).

#### *Suicide*

Despite our increased focus on suicide prevention through clinical and non-clinical initiatives, we have yet to see the results we hoped for with regard to preventing these tragic deaths. During the past year, we continued to experience record high deaths by suicide. However, we remain undaunted in our efforts to enhance leader engagement, training, and awareness to mitigate stressors that may lead someone to choose suicide.

In addition to our efforts to strengthen resilience, enhance leader visibility, and improve our prevention and intervention capabilities, we initiated a Vice Chief of Staff of the Army-led chain teach to Army Commands in 1st quarter, fiscal year 2022. This initiative is designed to introduce the field to our new public health approach to prevention of suicide while ensuring consistent implementation across the force, down to the Army's most junior leaders.

We have also revamped our suicide prevention training, Ask, Care, Escort (ACE). The curriculum now aligns with DoD Instruction 6490.16 and continues to support the promotion of suicide prevention and intervention concepts and practices intended to reduce stigma, increase awareness, and facilitate help-seeking behaviors.

In addition, another tool to help leaders better "see" their soldiers—the Behavioral Health (BH) Pulse Tool—was fielded in 2021 to provide leaders with visibility of a variety of BH problems, BH utilization, command climate, social relationships, and risky behaviors. Developed at the Walter Reed Army Institute of Research, in conjunction with psychiatrists from the Office of the Surgeon General, BH Pulse is a key tool in our efforts to prevent harmful behaviors and enhance well-being. Also, the Behavioral Health Readiness and Suicide Risk Reduction Review (R4) Tool is being fielded in April. The R4 tool provides leaders with practical knowledge for communicating with soldiers on suicide prevention.

The Army, as well as the DoD, remains committed to understanding and addressing factors that contribute to suicide. On March 22, 2022, the Secretary of Defense ordered the creation of an independent panel to review suicides in the military in accordance with the fiscal year 2022 NDAA, section 738. Per the Secretary of Defense's direction, the Suicide Prevention and Response Independent Review Com-

mittee (SPRIRC), will review relevant suicide prevention and response activities, immediate actions underway on sexual assault, and the IRC recommendations on sexual assault in the military. The intent is to ensure SPRIRC recommendations are synchronized and support ongoing sexual assault prevention activities and capabilities.

The SPRIRC will visit nine bases, interview soldiers and officials there, and conduct a confidential survey. Army bases included in the review are Fort Wainwright and Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson, Alaska; Camp Humphreys, Korea; and Fort Campbell, Kentucky. The SPRIRC's work is scheduled to begin in May, and the Committee will file an initial report to the Secretary of Defense by December 20, 2022. Findings and recommendations will be provided to Congress by February 18, 2023.

#### *Alcohol and other Substance Use*

The Army continues to address the misuse of alcohol and other substances that often serve as a facilitator to harmful behaviors. We continue to employ a multidisciplinary, holistic prevention approach to reduce substance use for our most at-risk population—junior enlisted males with co-occurring psychological or physical conditions. Also, we have developed a new awareness campaign: “Let’s Talk: I’m Listening” that’s scheduled for fielding later this year. The campaign emphasizes the importance of leader engagement and unit cohesion in identifying and supporting those who may be at risk of binge drinking or self-medicating through alcohol and prescribed or illicit drugs.

#### *COVID-19*

As the Army continues to operate on a global scale in a persistent COVID environment, our focus remains the readiness and well-being of our soldiers, civilians, contractors, and their family members. Leaders at all levels of command remain vigilant, as COVID remains a risk to the force. We continue to educate our personnel on the criticality of our vaccination program, and enforce the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and DoD force health protection measures to ensure we are ready and able to execute any mission. Currently, 97 percent of the AC is either fully vaccinated or have received at least one shot. The ARNG and USAR vaccination deadline is June 30th, and currently sit at 79 percent and 87 percent respectively.

#### *Transition Assistance Program*

It is in the Army’s and our Nation’s best interest to ensure soldiers transition successfully back into our communities after their military service. All soldiers are required to begin the transition process no later than 365 days before the date of their anticipated transition from Active Duty. The Transition Assistance Program (TAP) remains available to all veterans for six months after transition, and to all retirees for life.

According to data from the Department of Labor, in fiscal year 2021, the unemployment rate for all veterans decreased 1 percent from the fiscal year 2020 high due to COVID-19. As a result of the Army TAP, the unemployment rate for recently transitioned veterans was 0.9 percent lower than the national and non-veteran rates. Army TAP efforts, combined with the Nation’s low veteran unemployment rate, have reduced the Army’s annual unemployment reimbursement costs from a high of \$514.6 million in fiscal year 2011 to \$112.7 million in fiscal year 2021—a 78.1 percent decrease.

As part of the Transition Assistance Program Career Skills Program (CSP), soldiers have the opportunity to take part in first-class apprenticeships, on-the-job training, employment skills training, and internships. During fiscal year 2021, 6,083 soldiers successfully completed a CSP, and 5,463 (90 percent) were placed into careers following their CSP training, despite a pandemic that moved most CSP training for the Army to an online or virtual platform.

#### *Soldier for Life*

The Army’s Soldier for Life program continues to focus its efforts on influencing policies, programs, and services that support soldiers, veterans, and their families, while also conducting community outreach throughout the country. The program has maintained a consistent presence with Veteran Service Organizations and Non-Profits during the pandemic, with increasing engagements in fiscal year 2022, now that organizations have started to welcome in-person presentations and visits. Furthermore, the Soldier for Life team has focused on supporting military spouse employment initiatives. By collaborating with the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) and Department of Labor, Soldier for Life is taking steps to help ensure states are aware of inbound transitioning military personnel and their families prior to their

arrival in their new community. Ensuring that each state has advanced notice of each inbound soldier and their needs is critical to a successful transition. In addition, Soldier for Life has also taken steps to provide support to transitioning soldiers by informing them of the opportunity to be assigned sponsors, through a VA non-profit partner, in the communities in which they plan to reside after service. These sponsors are trained and certified by the VA and can help guide all soldiers, but especially the most junior, through the challenges associated with transitioning to civilian life.

#### THE PEOPLE OF THE ARMY

The men and women who serve in uniform and as Army civilians represent the best of our great country. We rely on their skills, commitment, and character to accomplish the Army's mission to fight and win our Nation's wars.

##### *The Diversity of the Force*

Over the last 14 years, the Army's Enlisted Force has become racially and ethnically more diverse, with Hispanic soldiers accounting for the biggest increase in minority representation. The Combat Arms Outreach program is a targeted effort to attract and commission a diverse officer talent pool reflective of the Nation we serve and the soldiers it leads. Combat Arms Outreach Engagement Teams will consist of diverse company grade and field grade officers from Combat Arms branches. Teams will conduct engagements at ROTC programs to encourage cadets to join Combat Arms branches.

For the Total Force Army, White, non-Hispanic representation in the Enlisted Force has decreased from 60 percent in 2007 to 51 percent in 2021. Meanwhile, Hispanic representation has increased from 11.7 percent to 18.7 percent over the same period. Asian and Pacific Islanders have also increased as a share of the Enlisted Force from 4 percent in 2007 to 6.3 percent in 2021. Female representation in the Enlisted Force has increased slightly over the last 14 years. In 2007, 13.4 percent of enlisted soldiers were women, whereas today, 14.8 percent of enlisted soldiers are women. The Army is finalizing its Enlisted Diversity Plan, which contains initiatives to address recruiting, developing, and retaining the diverse talent it needs to address sub-population underrepresentation.

Over the last 14 years, the Officer Corps has also become racially and ethnically more diverse, with Hispanics and Asians accounting for the biggest increase in minority representation. White, non-Hispanic representation in the Officer Corps has decreased from 74 percent in 2007 to 70 percent in 2021. Meanwhile, Hispanic and Asian representation has increased from 5 percent to 8 percent over the same period. Non-Hispanic Blacks have declined slightly as a share of the Officer Corps from 12 percent in 2007 to 11 percent in 2021. There has also been an increase in females in the Officer Corps over the last 14 years. In 2007, 16.7 percent of officers were women, whereas today, 19.8 percent of officers are women. In January 2021, the Army published its Expanding Diversity in the Officer Corps Plan, which included 25 initiatives to address diversity shortfalls in the Army Officer Corps.

##### *Women in the Army*

In 2011, 15.6 percent of soldiers in the Total Army were women. Today, 18.3 percent of soldiers are women. In addition to comprising an increased share of the Total Force, women continue to integrate into infantry, armor, and field artillery military occupational specialties at the Brigade Combat Team (BCT) level. As of the end of February 2022, 1,172 females were serving in infantry or armor roles within BCTs. BCT gender integration has progressed steadily, with all 31 BCTs integrated as of November 2021. The Army integrated its BCTs by cohort to ensure female soldiers arrive at a unit with at least one same-gendered battle buddy. Eight BCTs already have more than 50 female infantry and armor soldiers, and 20 BCTs have a dozen or more female infantry or armor soldiers. The Army will continue to address female recruitment and accession challenges to provide women multiple reasons to choose to serve in the Army. For example, a newly published directive mitigates two of the top reported causes of female soldier attrition: pregnancy and parenthood. This forward-leaning policy addressing multiple issues encountered by soldiers when growing their families, such as fertility treatments, postpartum body composition, and pregnancy loss, invests in the wellness and retention of all Army soldiers by normalizing parenthood for both mothers and fathers across the force.

##### *Army Civilians*

Comprising approximately 23 percent of the Total Force, over 287,000 Army civilians form the institutional backbone of the Army and are an integral part of the Army enterprise, providing mission-essential support to soldiers around the world.

Civilians serve in more than 500 unique job series in technical, medical, engineering, science, logistics, finance, and administrative disciplines.

In fiscal year 2021, the Army civilian workforce greatly exceeded or mirrored the U.S. labor force in representation of individuals with disabilities and veterans, but had a lower proportion of female representation. The Army also lagged behind the U.S. workforce in median age, meaning that Army civilian ranks have a higher proportion of older employees than the overall working U.S. population.

#### PERSONNEL MODERNIZATION

The foundation of Army Readiness is Personnel Readiness. Programs, policies, innovations, and management models are transforming the Army's Personnel Systems to meet future needs. These changes will provide our soldiers and civilians with more opportunities to excel; give our Army the enduring advantage of a transparent, data rich personnel environment; and improve our ability to compete for and retain talent.

##### *The Integrated Personnel and Pay System—Army (IPPS-A)*

The Integrated Personnel and Pay System—Army (IPPS-A) is the new, web-based personnel and pay system moving the Army towards 21st century data management at the enterprise level. Building on strong foundational priorities of people, modernization, and readiness, it delivers a secure, comprehensive, and data-rich Human Resources (HR) talent management system to the Total Force.

More than 2 years ago, the ARNG became the first component to implement IPPS-A, integrating modern personnel management and data analytics capabilities across all 54 states and territories. With the deployment of Release 3 by the end of 2022, all three components will begin to execute personnel, pay, and talent management functions in IPPS-A seamlessly across the Total Force. IPPS-A embraces emerging technologies and aligns with the Army's efforts to build a more effective and efficient force. With Release 3, the Army will achieve HR data cleanliness, clearly define authoritative data sources and services, and facilitate the decommissioning of numerous legacy HR applications and systems. These are all necessary for creating a data-rich environment as we continue to set the conditions for migrating all HR systems to a future cloud-based system. The Army has responded with agility to the challenges associated with integrating its personnel and pay systems and will continue to do so going forward.

In support of the Army's effort to modernize Talent Management, work will continue to expand IPPS-A functionality and add additional capability through a series of improvements out to 2030 and beyond. Our HR IT modernization efforts support the talent management system we are designing to better recruit, retain, and reward the very best personnel essential to sustaining the All-Volunteer Force. Looking forward, IPPS-A will integrate the new Army global payroll system with Release 4, providing a congressionally-mandated fiscal audit capability and improved talent management functionality.

#### TALENT MANAGEMENT

The 21st century environment and the critical human experiences of Multi-Domain Operations will place unprecedented demands on soldiers and leaders. Continued investment in acquiring, developing, employing, and retaining talent will keep our Army at the forefront of human capital development and performance while providing the Nation with a multi-faceted team that can fight and win in unpredictable conditions. To maintain our competitive advantage, we must determine the critical human attributes—among those being technical proficiency—to operate in this environment. The Army must continue to build a talent management system capable of acquiring and leveraging critical talent data—the knowledge, skills, behaviors, and preferences of its soldiers, balanced with the needs of the Army.

##### *Fiscal Year 2019 NDAA Authorities*

With the implementation of the fiscal year 2019 NDAA authorities, the Army has placed special interest in the advancement of individuals with specific, high-demand technical skills. The Army is leveraging these authorities through direct commissioning to bring on candidates with special skills. Of note, since 2018, 18 Cyber officers, one Military Intelligence Officer, and one Functional Area 50 (Force Management) Officer received direct commissions, and another 56 candidates across multiple branches and functional areas are currently in the appointment process. Additionally, the Army has identified 538 positions that can be used for Brevet promotions on the critical position list. Since 2020, 84 Officers have been Brevet-promoted and another 68 are currently in the process of Senate confirmation.

As part of the Army's 21st Century Talent Management System, we have developed alternatives to promotions based primarily on time in rank. Officers now have the option to opt-in or opt-out of promotion consideration. These options give servicemembers more flexibility to balance their professional, personal, and family priorities, while ensuring the Army has the right people with the right skills in the right jobs. Of the 6,874 officers eligible to opt-in to promotion boards based on date of rank in fiscal year 2021, 2,544 opted-in to be considered early for promotion, and 167 were selected. In addition, 97 percent (176 of 181) of the officers who applied to opt-out of a promotion selection board have been approved.

#### *Army Talent Alignment (ATAP)*

The ATAP is a decentralized, regulated market-style hiring system that aligns officers with jobs based on preferences shaped by the unique knowledge, skills, and behaviors of each officer, as well as the talents desired by commanders for their available positions. To date, 60,000 officers and warrant officers have been assigned using the Talent Marketplace. During the most recent marketplace cycle, 69 percent of officers participating in the market obtained a Top 3 preference while 80 percent of officers obtained a Top 10 preference. Talent markets also enable the Army to experiment with monetary and non-monetary incentives to fill critical positions and retain talent. Monetary incentives have included Selective Retention Bonuses, Assignment Incentive Pay, and Special Duty Assignment Pay to remain highly competitive among other governmental agencies and private industry. Non-monetary incentives such as advanced specialty training, stabilization, credentialing, and broadening assignments are also available.

While the "marketplace" is currently the principal element of ATAP, gathering data throughout a soldier's career is critical. Innovations on objective assessments are providing the Army with valuable information about its people's talents. These assessments—administered at various stages throughout a career—complement subjective evaluations to integrate talent data into selection and assignment practices.

Similar to ATAP, we have begun to implement the Assignment Satisfaction Key-Enlisted Module (ASK-EM) to support Active Duty Noncommissioned Officers (NCOs) being considered for Staff Sergeant (SSG) through Master Sergeant (MSG) assignments. On average, 7,000 to 9,000 NCOs participate in the market each cycle with approximately 30,000 NCOs receiving their assignments through this process each year. Unlike Assignment Incentive Marketplace 2.0, ASK-EM does not provide the unit the ability to vote on NCOs. However, we are working to implement a two-sided market for the MSG and First Sergeant population once IPPS-A goes live. A pilot of this capability is expected by the end of fiscal year 2023.

#### *Command Assessment Program (CAP)*

The Command Assessment Program (CAP) continues to expand and improve the Army's ability to select more capable leaders at the battalion and brigade levels. In November 2021, the Army completed the third iteration of CAP. Nearly 3,600 leaders at LTC, COL, GS-14, GS-15, and E-9 levels have assessed through CAP over the last 3 years. CAP has also expanded to include Acquisition Corps Leaders and Program Executives, Medical Corps Commanders, Brigade Command Sergeants Major, Division Chaplains, and candidates from the U.S. Army Reserve and National Guard, as well as the U.S. Air Force. During CAP, participants are offered the opportunity to utilize Executive Coaching under the Army Coaching Program. This program provides professional feedback to support the development of leaders and their understanding of personal strengths and weaknesses. When compared to the legacy Command Selection List system, CAP assesses and identifies leaders who are more cognitively capable, better written and verbal communicators, more physically fit, more self-aware, and less likely to exhibit counterproductive or ineffective leader traits. The Independent Review Commission on Sexual Assault in the Military recognized CAP as a promising practice for identifying leaders who are committed to the well-being of those under their command, as well as screening for leaders who do not show similar commitment.

While it is too early to draw definitive longitudinal trends, recent results from the Command Assessment Programs are as follows:

- *Battalion Commander Assessment Program (BCAP)*—To date, 2,178 Army Competitive Category Lieutenant Colonels competed for battalion-level commands and key staff positions in BCAP. Of those, 1900 (87.2 percent) were found ready for command.
- *Colonel Command Assessment Program (CCAP)*—To date, 603 Army Competitive Category Colonels competed for brigade-level commands and key staff positions in CCAP. Of those, 511 (84.7 percent) were found ready for command. The majority of these officers will take command in the summer of 2022.

- *Sergeant Major Assessment Program (SMAP)*—To date, 334 Sergeants Major competed for brigade-level Command Sergeant Major (CSM) positions. Of those, 287 (86 percent) were found ready and will fill approximately 130 brigade-level CSM openings in the near future.

#### BUILDING AND MAINTAINING A QUALITY FORCE

Our recruiting and retention efforts for both soldiers and civilians are focused on building and maintaining a diverse and talented force from across the Nation.

##### *Recruiting*

The Army enlisted 57,606 recruits in the AC, 34,658 recruits in the ARNG, and 11,690 recruits in the USAR in fiscal year 2021.

As of the end of February, the AC achieved more than 23 percent of its fiscal year 2022 recruiting mission of 60,000. Recruiting productivity will remain challenging with the overall low propensity and shrinking Qualified Military Applicant pool. The Army remains focused on quality over quantity, continuing to emphasize recruitment for military occupational specialties that are critical to future force modernization. The Army has implemented several initiatives to improve recruiting efficiency, effectiveness, and productivity including revisions in incentives, accessions policies, and marketing efforts. We continue to adapt the way we recruit talent into the Army to sustain the All-Volunteer Force. The Army will modestly reduce its end strength in fiscal year 2022 and fiscal year 2023 as we put the force on a sustainable strategic path. The Regular Army expects to meet an end strength of 476,000 in fiscal year 2022. At the end of fiscal year 2023, the AC will be at 473,000, the ARNG will be at 336,000 and the USAR will be at 189,500. Looking at the force and the recruiting outlook, we are confident we can maintain the quality of recruits we need at this level as the Army rebalances its portfolio by investing in modernization, infrastructure, and personnel support programs.

The ARNG achieved more than 29 percent of its fiscal year 2022 recruiting mission of 38,430, as of the end of February. The ARNG will continue to see an impact to accessions due to COVID-19 restrictions in some states. With an aggressive emphasis on retention and attrition management, combined with an improved recruiting strategy, the ARNG expects to achieve its fiscal year 2022 NDAA end strength of 336,000.

The USAR achieved more than 27 percent of its recruiting mission of 14,650, as of the end of February. The USAR continues to reduce attrition and increase prior service transfers from the AC and Individual Ready Reserve as a means to offset accessions shortfalls. The USAR is not projecting to achieve its fiscal year 2022 NDAA end strength of 189,500.

##### *Officer Accessions*

The Army is on track to recruit and access more than 4,500 AC 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. The Army's primary commissioning sources (USMA, ROTC, and OCS) continue to advance processes to match talent and build diversity of race and gender across all Army officer branches.

##### *Retention*

The AC, USAR, and ARNG each achieved their fiscal year 2021 retention missions. Over the last 2 years, the AC retained soldiers at historical rates. Soldiers were provided a COVID extension option to provide stability during this turbulent period, which increased retention rates for soldiers likely to move to a different duty station. The fiscal year 2021 combined retention rate for eligible soldiers was approximately 80 percent. The fiscal year 2021 Cohort combined mission was accomplished at a rate of nearly 99 percent, while the fiscal year 2022 Cohort retained at a rate of 75 percent. These retention rates were the highest to date. The fiscal year 2021 in-year retention rate was an increase of nearly 4 percent over fiscal year 2020 and more than 6 percent over fiscal year 2019. In fiscal year 2022, the AC will accomplish its mission requirements, and is expected to exceed retention goals by 2,500 retention actions. These retention achievements support meeting our initial term, mid-term, and career soldier requirements. Army retention will maintain a competitive edge with the continued funding to support retention selective retention bonuses granted by Congress.

The Army saw consistent officer retention in fiscal year 2021, retaining 90 percent of Army Competitive Category (ACC) captains and 94 percent of ACC majors, which is consistent over the last 4 fiscal years. Overall, the Army retained 92 percent of



all officers and warrant officers in fiscal year 2021. Approximately 74 percent of officers are staying at least one year past their initial Active Duty Service Obligation.

#### *Non-Deployable Personnel*

The Army's current non-deployable initiatives have positioned the Army to be at or near the 5 percent goal for non-deployable personnel.

As of March 1, 2022, the Integrated Disability Evaluation System (IDES) non-deployable population was 11,477, which is a reduction of 723 cases from last year at the same time. Additionally, the average processing time (from referral until separation) decreased from 272 days in March 2021 to 210 days in March 2022. We expect the IDES to remain at these levels—about 1.5 percent of the total Army non-deployable personnel—throughout the summer and fall. The Army will continue to work closely with the VA and the DoD to ensure timely delivery of benefits for our Nation's wounded, ill, and injured soldiers. Efficient execution of the IDES process is critical to both readiness and taking care of our soldiers and families.

#### *Recruiting and Retaining Talent in Underrepresented Demographics*

The Army is developing a strategy to mitigate the obstacles of a challenging recruiting environment. This strategy will include advancement to marketing and media, leveraging community relationships, increasing connections to underrepresented demographics, and increasing outreach to previously un-tapped populations, such as college students. Additionally, in an effort to increase underrepresented demographics into the more competitive branches within the Army, the Army developed and implemented the Combat Arms Outreach—Engagement Team (CAO-ET) Pilot Program. CAO-ET focuses on increasing female and minority cadet interest in combat arms. This effort seeks to increase the pool of diverse, talented officers in combat arms career fields to build a bench of enterprise leaders for the future.

#### *Civilian Workforce Recruiting Efforts*

Reducing the time it takes to hire civilian employees remains a key initiative as the Army continuously strives for a modernized, 21st century approach to attract, recruit, and hire top civilian talent. Efforts specifically aimed at expediting the hiring of civilians are increasing personnel readiness and ensuring talented individuals fill critical vacancies.

The Army also encouraged the use of Schedule A hiring authority for Individuals with Disabilities, Veterans' Recruitment Appointment, and other authorities to build the Army bench with top civilian talent.

The Army has implemented several initiatives as part of a broader strategy to reduce civilian time-to-hire in support of the former Secretary of Defense's fiscal year 2025 hiring goal of 45 days. The Civilian Implementation Plan to the Army People Strategy places specific emphasis and focus on reducing time to hire to ensure the Army is competitive for top talent with other employers. A multi-year strategy to execute tasks supporting the

Civilian Implementation Plan are in progress. These efforts will assess hiring quality, leverage Office of Personnel Management resources, and optimize Civilian Human Resources Agency and Command civilian hiring operations. A key component of this strategy is decreasing candidate screening time through consistency of initial forms, fingerprinting, initial background checks, medical evaluations, drug testing, and suitability determinations, as well as reducing processing time for security clearances. The time it takes the Army to fill civilian positions has fluctuated over the past several years as follows: the fiscal year 2019 hiring time was 90.6 days; the fiscal year 2020 time was 83.4 days; the fiscal year 2021 time was 86.2 days; and currently, the fiscal year 2022 hiring time is 90.5 days. As the Army's multi-year strategy to reduce time to hire matures, we expect to achieve consistent reductions in the time it takes to hire civilian personnel.

#### *Marketing*

The Army's current marketing efforts focus on acquiring diverse talent in an environment facing various economic headwinds and decreased propensity. These headwinds are pushing young adults to seek stability, security, and safety. In order to attract the talent the Army requires, we must inform and inspire public awareness of the wide array of opportunities the Army offers. Marketing remains a key tool to reaching qualified recruits.

The ad campaign "What's Your Warrior?" launched in 2019 to highlight the breadth and depth of Army careers for Generation Z (Gen Z) youth. "What's Your Warrior?" continues with subsequent campaigns based on extensive research to help close knowledge, culture, and relatability gaps with Gen Z. Two campaigns help connect youth with the Army. First, the Army launched the "Know Your Army" Cam-

paign in March 2022, highlighting Army benefits available to youth considering their personal and professional goals. Second, the newest chapter of the “What’s Your Warrior” campaign known as “Passions,” connects prospects’ passions to opportunities available in the Army. These marketing campaigns leverage a multi-media mix of traditional and digital advertising to reach Gen Z recruits and their influencers across platforms including national broadcast, out-of-home advertisement, print, websites, and social media.

#### CONCLUSION

The people of the United States Army—these men and women who serve our Nation, both in and out of uniform, along with their families—are our strength and our legacy. Their talents, courage, and commitment make our Army the greatest in the world. To keep our Army strong, we must build our force with individuals who embody the best of America, and we must offer them opportunities to allow both their careers and families to flourish. A diverse, talented, strong, healthy, and resilient, force is the most important indicator of our readiness.

Chairwoman Gillibrand, Ranking Member Tillis, Members of this Committee, I thank you for your generous and unwavering support of our outstanding soldiers, civilian professionals, and their families.

Senator GILLIBRAND. Thank you so much. Vice Admiral Nowell.

#### **STATEMENT OF VICE ADMIRAL JOHN NOWELL, USN, CHIEF OF NAVAL PERSONNEL, UNITED STATES NAVY**

Vice Admiral NOWELL. Chairwoman Gillibrand, Ranking Member Tillis, and distinguished Subcommittee Members, thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today and to talk to you as the Navy’s Chief of Naval Personnel on our personnel policy programs and initiatives. It is my distinct pleasure and privilege to represent the sailors who were on watch 24/7 in every corner of the globe, above, on, and below the surface of the seas.

The demands of strategic competition, now more than ever, require that we remain well ahead of our adversaries who are persistently challenging our traditional warfighting dominance. To do this, we must continue to enhance our asymmetric advantage, our people. We must consistently attract, develop, and retain the world’s most talented and skilled Navy combat force.

While we remain committed to attracting the best talent our Nation has to offer, we are beginning to witness an increased competition for talent. As was mentioned in the first panel, last month, the unemployment rate dropped to 3.6 percent, while wages continue to grow, resulting in a very strong labor demand in all markets nationwide.

While we are trending to meet our fiscal year 2022 accession mission at the aggregate level, we will do so by reducing delay in entry program from historic norms, which will be challenging to sustain. To remain competitive, we will continue to leverage our e-talent teams, our large scale digital recruiting presence with our Forged by the Sea marketing advertising strategy.

We do reach all zip codes and will continue to not only leverage this, but also enlistment bonuses in our relentless effort to attract the diverse and skilled talent that we need. We continue to invest in trained, resilient, and educated sailors who can outthink, outdecide, and outfight any potential adversary.

In particular, we are developing our sailor talent through initiatives such as Ready Relevant Learning, Warrior Toughness, and our Culture of Excellence campaign. Ready Relevant Learning fundamentally changes the way our sailors train, transforming an in-

dustrial era training model into a modern, agile system with tailored career long learning continuum for each sailor.

Warrior Toughness is a holistic approach to developing the tools needed for sailors to optimize their performance in even the most stressful circumstances. Our Culture of Excellence promotes a force wide environment of respect and resiliency for our sailors to thrive in the face of personal and professional adversity.

Driven by the overarching goals of maximizing warfighting excellence and readiness, the Navy wide campaign is directly led by the Chief of Naval Operations (CNO), who leverages a Navy leader development framework, which employs a data driven look across all of our 17 warfighting communities with a regular drumbeat.

Building upon the retention gains of the last few years, we are committed to keeping the right talent and experience in the right pay grades and specialties, while remaining mindful of the current economic trends and how they influence our sailors' career decisions. To enhance retention, we continue to optimize our talent management systems to provide greater flexibility to sailors in career choice, development training, and assignments.

Our detailing marketplace assignment policy, which will replace our existing seashore flow model, offers a wide range of monetary and non-monetary incentives to sailors primarily in sea intensive ratings right now to encourage them to serve longer where we need them most at sea. Commitment to continued investment in our sailors is necessary to sustain a fleet. We appreciate your strong support on our compensation to include vital, special, and incentive pays and bonuses, which now more than ever, are needed to target specific skills.

Finally, transforming the Navy's internal personnel business processes remains a top priority to ensure we are delivering world class HR [Human Resources] services to our sailors and their families. Again, I think Congress, for your support there. I remain inspired each and every day by our sailors. I know that you do, too, and each and every American can be proud of them and their families. I look forward to your questions.

[The prepared statement of Vice Admiral John B. Nowell follows:]

#### PREPARED STATEMENT BY VICE ADMIRAL JOHN B. NOWELL

##### INTRODUCTION

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 most important strategic asset, our people. As stated in the One Navy-Marine Corps Team: Strategic Guidance from the Secretary of the Navy and the Chief of Naval Operations (CNO) Navigation Plan, sailors remain our competitive warfighting advantage and are the true source of our naval power. To maintain our advantage at sea and win in long-term strategic competition, MyNavy HR continues to implement, evaluate, and improve our personnel programs and policies to help attract, develop, and manage the most talented and diverse workforce possible.

##### ATTRACTING TALENT

MyNavy HR is dedicated to attracting the best talent our Nation has to offer. We have improved the efficiency of our recruiting organization through realignment, transformation, workforce improvements, and policy changes. Our digital Forged by the Sea marketing and advertising campaign targets diverse high quality recruits, whose online media consumption has continued to increase. However, as COVID-

19 transitions from a pandemic to endemic, we are beginning to witness an increased competition for talent. In March 2022, the unemployment rate dropped to 3.6 percent while wages continue to grow. Strong economic conditions in the U.S., like those characterizing periods of expansions, tend to challenge Navy's ability to meet recruiting and retention requirements. The COVID-19 recession had strikingly different economic effects from other U.S. recessions with marked differences in depth, duration, types of sectors and workers affected as well as the policy response. While lessons learned from the endemic are ongoing, we are mindful that insights gleaned from previous recessions may not shed light on our current recruiting and retention environment. We consistently monitor economic conditions and reassess the important role they play in understanding how we effectively manage our talent. We continue to leverage our competitive pay and benefits package, talent management initiatives, and MyNavy HR service delivery in order to meet our recruiting and retention goals.

#### *Enlisted Recruiting*

MyNavy HR remains committed to removing barriers to entry and improving the diversity of our Navy. We are reshaping efforts to better address underrepresented groups, refining strategies to drill down to generational interests and behavior, and leveraging a whole-person concept in all recruiting and accessions efforts. For fiscal year 2021, MyNavy HR achieved 100 percent enlisted accession mission for the Active Component (AC) (33,559/33,400) and non-prior service requirements for the Reserve component (RC) (2,733/2,625). COVID-19 continued to affect our recruiters' ability to leverage in-person events, reduced access to high school students and in-person traffic to recruiting stations. As a result, national advertising remains critical to the mission for awareness and lead generation. MyNavy HR deployed a cloud-based enterprise Customer Relationship Management (eCRM) Mobile Application and augmented digital tools to assist recruiters with virtually engaging future sailors and potential applicants. In addition to digital initiatives, MyNavy HR continued to leverage enlistment bonuses and other virtual tools.

The recruiting environment remains challenging to meet the fiscal year 2022 AC and RC enlisted accession mission of 33,400 and 7,400, respectively. Youth propensity to serve in the military declined from 13 percent in 2018 to nine percent in 2021. Youth eligibility for service also remains low, with two percent of the target market being high academic quality, propensed to serve, and both medically and legally eligible to serve without a waiver. Competition for this talent has resulted in MyNavy HR contracting applicants into the Delayed Entry Program at a slower rate than shipping future sailors to Recruit Training Command (RTC).

To improve the contract rate and better enable our recruiters, we are working towards expanding the eligible market and enhancing Navy's competitiveness. E-Talent Teams were established to engage the market virtually; driving interest in Navy careers while generating leads for recruiters to engage. The eCRM system continues to be updated, which will save recruiters time by minimizing their administrative workload, allowing them to focus on engaging with potential applicants. Additionally, MyNavy HR recently expanded waivers for tattoos, age restrictions, and Armed Forces Qualification Test score requirements. We also raised the enlistment bonus ceiling to \$50,000 and we are providing \$25,000 to all future sailors that ship before July 2022. Our marketing and advertising strategy continues to focus on the digital recruiting environment, highlighting real, authentic stories from actual sailors addressing the barriers, concerns and key motivators to joining.

#### *Officer Recruiting*

Our commissioning programs through the United States Naval Academy (USNA), Naval Reserve Officers Training Corps (NROTC), and Officer Candidate School (OCS) continue to be popular. In fiscal year 2021, MyNavy HR attained 99 percent of the AC (2,492 of 2,524) and 71 percent (941 of 1,319) of the RC officer mission. The primary challenge for the fiscal year 2022 AC and RC officer mission of 2,468 and 1,350, respectively, is today's incredibly competitive labor market. To mitigate this challenge and improve opportunities for diverse officer candidates, MyNavy HR implemented a number of major initiatives:

- Junior Officer Diversity Outreach program partners with Unrestricted Line Officers (URLs) to share their Navy experiences with college students within underrepresented communities throughout the country.
- Baccalaureate Degree Completion Program provides financial incentives to college students to complete baccalaureate degree requirements and attend OCS to earn a commission.
- URL In-Service Procurement Program provides an officer commission pathway for Active Duty enlisted personnel who meet eligibility criteria.

Additionally, the NROTC Preparatory Program (NPP) continues to expand NROTC scholarship opportunities by selecting applicants who show great potential via grades, character, and extra-curricular activities, but may lack resources available at more advanced high schools. NPP enhances midshipmen candidates' mental and physical foundations, better preparing them for success in the NROTC program. In academic year 2019–2020, the program's second year, 67 midshipmen candidates enrolled in NPP, of which 49 students successfully completed their prep year and selected for follow-on NROTC scholarships. During academic year 2020–2021, 109 midshipmen candidates enrolled and 85 students completed the program and received follow-on NROTC scholarships. This past fall, NPP continued to expand the program with 113 midshipmen candidates enrolled.

Finally, we established Broadened Opportunity for Officer Selection and Training (BOOST) 2.0, which uses available seats at the Naval Academy Preparatory School (NAPS) to prepare NROTC program applicants. Upon completing BOOST 2.0, students are assigned to a follow-on NROTC unit, with a four-year scholarship, to an affiliated school with demonstrated success in graduating high percentages of diverse students. A pilot program began in academic year 2021–2022 consisting of 10 candidates with seven on track to graduate. For academic year 2022–2023 will select an additional 10 additional candidates to attend NAPS.

#### TALENT DEVELOPMENT

Learning, innovation, and personal and professional development are part of our naval heritage. To achieve a warfighting advantage, we must instill continuous learning behaviors in our Navy Total Force. These behaviors will enable adaptation and improvement, and strengthen our ability to out-think our competitors. Navy is currently engaged in initiatives to foster and sustain a high-performance culture that maximizes individual sailor development and potential in a very deliberate, enduring, and sailor-focused way. We recognize that learning is integral to every aspect of a sailor's development and comes in a variety of forms including formal training and education, experiential learning and on-the-job training obtained in the operating forces, self-directed study that taps into an individual's natural curiosity and personal interests, and mentorship. Investing in the intellectual capital of the Navy team and instilling a lifelong passion for continuous learning in sailors will be our foundation as we grow a decisive force that can out-think and out-fight any challenger to American interests. This career long learning continuum begins during initial accession training.

##### *Accession Training*

Accessions training is the first step of transforming civilians into highly skilled, operational, and combat-ready warfighters, while providing the tools and opportunities for continuous learning and development. Upon complete removal of Restriction of Movement operations in December 2021, RTC shifted from an eight to ten week Basic Military Training (BMT). The 10-week BMT provides additional Recruit Division Commander training time for focus on reps-and-sets in core competencies; extended time for recruits to prepare for the official Physical Fitness Assessment; and the addition of the 4th Phase/Sailor for Life curriculum, resulting in higher quality and better trained sailors to the Fleet. When fully implemented, the 10-week BMT allows for increased focus on firefighting, damage control, and Auxiliary Security Force qualifications, fully preparing sailors for duty in the Fleet on day one. MyNavy HR graduated the first training group of over 800 sailors under the 10-week BMT on March 18, 2022.

Navy continues to instill toughness and resiliency in our sailors through Warrior Toughness (WT), an evidence-based, holistic, individualized human performance skillset that strengthens the mental, physical, and spiritual toughness with a particular emphasis on the pursuit of peak performance. This skillset is tested throughout the recruit's time in BMT, where they are able to cultivate success in a diverse environment, and push themselves to reach new levels of physical, mental, and spiritual toughness. At the end of the training, recruits harness tools developed through the WT transformation as they connect what they have learned at RTC to historical naval events and prepare to contribute to the mental, physical, and spiritual toughness of the Fleet. In addition to the WT curriculum, all enlisted sailors complete Level 0 Familiarization firefighting training at RTC and are required to complete Level I Basic Ships and Submarines firefighting training before reporting to their first sea duty assignment. Sailors trained in firefighting and damage control on day one is a force multiplier for the warfighting effort and better prepares the Navy to prevent loss of ships or submarines due to fire and damage.

### *Navy Virtual Training Environments*

Across the career continuum of training, Navy employs a variety of live, virtual, and constructive training environments to provide realistic training in a safe, non-operational environment. A good example of this during the accession phase is the Conning Officer Virtual Environment (COVE). COVE are ship-handling simulators utilized at OCS and NROTC units that are preloaded with standardized curricula that aligns with the officer Professional Core Competencies curriculum to ensure each student develops the basic essential skills needed to maneuver a United States Navy Warship. The detailed scenarios embedded into each unit reinforce the students' seamanship, navigation, and plotting skills.

### *Ready Relevant Learning (RRL)*

The RRL initiative continues to modernize Navy training and accelerate delivery methods, supplementing our traditional brick-and-mortar schoolhouses with modern, multi-media, multi-platform solutions. RRL delivers the right training, at the right time, and in the right way by developing a career-long learning continuum (CLLC) for every sailor, modernizing training to maximize impact and relevance, and accelerating our processes to bring new training to the Fleet.

Our CLLC has progressed from determining and validating the current "what" and "when" of existing accession-level training, into developing CLLCs across a sailor's career to ensure every sailor receives the right training at the real-world point of need to support assigned tasking. CLLCs capture all the technical, professional, and leadership training and applicable qualifications, certifications, and skillsets established for each rating. It serves as a comprehensive roadmap for sailors by outlining rating-specific training and leadership timelines. It also functions as an analytical tool to assess the master task list for each community's ratings, to help identify training gaps. Continuums are complete for four ratings: Yeoman (YN), Yeoman Submarine (YNS), Retail Services Specialist (RS), and Quartermaster (QM). Continuums for 10 ratings are currently in development: Operations Specialist (OS), Aviation Maintenance Administrationman (AZ), Personnel Specialist (PS), Logistics Specialist (LS), Logistics Specialist Submarine (LSS), Aircrew Survival Equipmentman (PR), Sonar Technician Surface (STG), Aviation Boatswain's Mate Launching and Recovery (ABE), Aviation Boatswain's Mate Fuels (ABF), and Aviation Boatswain's Mate Aircraft Handling (ABH).

Work on the Training Assessment Process is ongoing, solidifying the Fleet's role in both defining learning and performance requirements and validating analyses. The Type Commanders (TYCOM), working closely with MyNavy HR, are identifying metrics to assess the sailor's learning, performance, and behaviors in the classroom and the Fleet. Metrics related to the modernized OS course began development in fiscal year 2021. Leveraging the Kirkpatrick Model, these metrics will identify ways to improve and focus curricula to meet Fleet needs.

Eight ratings are in modernized delivery as of fiscal year 2021: Intelligence Specialist (IS), OS, QM, RS, PS, YN, YNS, and AZ. Additionally, 31 ratings are in the content conversion process with another nine ratings entering content conversion in fiscal year 2022.

### *Education*

Education has long been one of the key strengths of the naval profession and continues to be of critical importance for our future. As we stand on the horizon of employing a Fleet with new operating concepts and evolving capabilities, we need sailors with diverse backgrounds, experiences, critical thinking skills, and the mental agility to operate across the spectrum of change that lies ahead. To accomplish this, we continue to leverage the United States Naval Community College (USNCC) and our voluntary education programs such as Tuition Assistance (TA) and the Navy College Program for Afloat College Education.

Navy successfully completed the first USNCC pilot course offerings in June 2021, with nearly 600 students from the Navy, Marine Corps, and Coast Guard completing courses in general education/military history, nuclear technology, cyber security, and data analytics/intelligence. Leveraging the degree granting authority provided by Congress in the Fiscal Year 2022 National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA), and in collaboration with civilian academic institutions, USNCC maximizes credit earned for servicemembers' technical training and enables students to earn an associate degree in Naval Science, with a warfighting-relevant concentration, at no cost to the student. Pilot 2 is underway and will continue through fiscal year 2023 with expanded enrollment for up to 3,000 Active Duty enlisted sailors, marines, and coast guardsmen. USNCC recently had 126 students successfully complete the first direct-taught Naval Studies Certificate course, Naval Ethics and Leadership. Upon completion of the Naval Studies Certificate program, these stu-

dents will continue in one of seven professional concentration areas: military studies, cyber security and network administration, nuclear engineering technology, data analytics, organizational leadership, maritime logistics, and aviation maintenance technology. Once the USNCC reaches full operating capacity, up to 10,000 students will have the opportunity to participate in one of 15 concentration areas.

Navy voluntary education continues to service sailors' educational needs through the highly successful TA program and the Navy College Program for Afloat College Education, which provides sailors the opportunity to complete courses while deployed at sea. These programs empower sailors to advance their personal and academic development through formal education that leads to a high school diploma, formal certificate, and/or an associate, bachelor's, or master's degree. Since reframing the TA program to focus on professional qualifications and warfighting readiness first, the successful completion of TA courses increased from 91 percent in fiscal year 2019 to nearly 94 percent in fiscal year 2021.

Navy remains committed to continuous learning as a key warfighting enabler. Educating current and future leaders is a necessary investment; it helps to maintain our competitive advantage and enables us to succeed in long-term strategic competition. We reflect this commitment in our talent management objectives designed to identify, encourage, and place our highest-caliber officers in selective graduate-level programs, thereby enhancing our warfighting capabilities and building strategic superiority. One example is the requirement that all URL officers in Year Group 2015 and beyond complete in-residence graduate education before assuming major command. In-residence education programs continue to provide the best opportunity to mature critical strategic thinking skills necessary for Navy leaders today and into the future. This requirement will ensure our most talented officers are given the opportunity to take this educational pause to mature their strategic thinking skills.

#### *Leader Development Continuum*

Continuous world-class leader development at all levels is one of Navy's strategic advantages. The Naval Leadership and Ethics Center (NLEC) continues to support and build upon the Navy Leader Development Framework version 3.0 by offering leader development classes from E-4 to O-6. Key topics include self-awareness, ethical foundations, ethical decision-making, unconscious bias in decision-making, and emotional survival/toughness. Recently, Navy integrated senior enlisted leaders who are not assigned to a Command Master Chief billet as participants in the Senior Leader Course. This allows senior officers and senior enlisted to confront ethical scenarios they may face together in a safe, non-attributional classroom environment. Additionally, the Enlisted Leader Development (ELD) program continues to grow rapidly and receives extremely positive feedback. As part of the ELD program, enlisted personnel attend a course commensurate to their paygrade and explore topics in self-awareness, ethical decision-making, naval heritage, coaching, and moral courage. In December 2021, Navy began offering the new Chief Petty Officer (CPO) Leader Development Course, which will replace the current CPO Indoctrination Course and further explore leadership topics while helping prepare participants attend the Senior Enlisted Academy and the Command Master Chief Course.

While many leadership principles have remained unchanged across many generations, the area of leader development continues to grow rapidly; the curriculum at NLEC reflects this growth. Core topics of character development, ethical foundation, and moral courage continue to be pillars on which all leaders must have a solid footing. Navy continues to stay current with modern research on mental agility, growth mindset, unconscious bias, coaching, and self-awareness. Recent advances in curriculum include topics involving decision science, which explore the effects of cognitive biases in everyday decision-making. In these instances, learners are presented real-life case studies, which they discuss the cognitive biases that may come into play during each scenario and practice techniques to mitigate these biases. In addition, the tenets of WT were added to NLEC courses broadly, primarily through the topic of emotional survival/toughness. This topic focuses on preparing personnel for the daily challenge of a high-stress position, as well as the possible experience of a traumatic event and/or major life change. Discussions center on how to recognize the impacts daily challenges have on one's thoughts and behaviors and how to mitigate the impacts on oneself and one's family. The addition of WT, particularly the idea of sharpening one's mind, body, and soul, has proven to be a perfect complement to the existing curricula. Additionally, NLEC has developed a bias mitigation tool designed to give learners a "nudge" toward more reflective thinking when making decisions. Furthermore, Navy is implementing Independent Review Commission (IRC) recommendations, including leadership development in the areas of

fostering healthy climates to reduce harmful behaviors and ensuring appropriate leadership response to sexual assault and sexual harassment.

#### *MyNavy Coaching*

MyNavy Coaching is a communication tool that builds and sustains a coaching culture within the Navy. Coaching is a communication skill rooted in the core skills of active listening, empathy, and asking powerful questions. Through MyNavy Coaching, we will increase the performance and maximize the potential of our sailors to build a stronger warfighting force built upon personal connections, increased engagement, empathy, heightened personal awareness, and promotion of a deeper level of learning. This empowers sailors to take responsibility for their development and performance. We are implementing MyNavy Coaching through a peer-to-peer coaching approach and a renewed focus on Mid-term Counseling.

#### CULTURE OF EXCELLENCE (COE)

As we attract and develop the Nation's best talent, we must also continue to promote a culture of respect and resiliency for our sailors to thrive in the face of personal and professional adversity. COE continues to be our Navy-wide framework designed to promote signature healthy behaviors and enhance warfighting excellence by instilling toughness, trust, and connectedness in sailors. The Navy's holistic COE Campaign Plan counters destructive behaviors and champions signature behaviors by focusing on four lines of effort:

- *Develop Lethal Warfighting Force.* RRL delivers the right training, at the right time, in the right manner, so that sailors are ready to operate and maintain their equipment at the extreme technical end of its capability to control the high end of maritime conflict.
- *Champion Signature Behaviors and Counter Destructive Behaviors.* The ten signature behaviors support the proactive prevention of destructive behaviors by showing sailors what "right" looks like.
- *Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI).* Navy actively includes sailors from all backgrounds and perspectives and harnesses the creative power of diversity and inclusive leadership, in accelerating Navy's warfighting advantage, lethality, and operational readiness.
- *Governance, Analytics, Assessment and Strategic Communication.* The governance structure of Navy's programs and strategic communications is continuously evaluated through Flag-level governance bodies, surveys, and working groups.

The foundation of our culture increases strength and resiliency across the Fleet and is a combination of encouraging Signature Behaviors, promoting inclusivity and representation, and training our sailors to build mental and physical toughness to prepare them for any challenge. Signature Behaviors call on sailors and civilians to treat others with respect, take responsibility for their actions, and be leaders who instill leadership in others. Signature Behaviors help sailors and civilians avoid making destructive decisions and enable optimized performance. All COE elements align with the Navy's core mission of building a more effective and lethal warfighting force. As we embrace this Culture of Excellence, our Navy will grow stronger and more capable of winning tomorrow's fight.

#### *Sexual Assault Prevention and Response (SAPR) & Sexual Harassment*

Navy's SAPR program continues to focus on increasing reporting and decreasing prevalence of sexual assault through primary prevention, refined response capabilities, treating victims with compassion, providing quality care, and addressing the barriers uniquely associated with male reporting of sexual assault. We continue to leverage metrics-based data to better understand where and why assaults occur, provide a more robust analytic capability, and ensure research-informed approaches to prevention programs and policies. We recently embarked on the third phase of the Department of Defense-mandated Prevention Plan of Action, a comprehensive approach to understanding the current environment, determining the scope of the problem, and assessing organizational factors that drive prevention. We are also incorporating recommendations from the IRC on Sexual Assault in the Military, using strategically phased activities to systemically improve prevention, climate and culture, victim care and support, and accountability related to sexual assault, sexual harassment, and other harmful behaviors. This includes addressing gaps in leader training to develop inclusive cultures that foster healthy command climates, completing a SAPR Workforce Study to ensure unfettered support to sexual assault victims, including long-term phasing out of reliance on collateral duty-dual-hatted victim advocates and Sexual Assault Response Coordinators, and phased hiring and integration of a primary prevention workforce that will mobilize needed personnel



with the knowledge and skills for effectively driving primary prevention strategies throughout the Fleet.

#### *Suicide Prevention*

The Navy suicide rate has decreased from 22.1 in 2019, to 19.3 in 2020. While it is too early to determine whether suicide rates will increase or decrease for Calendar Year 2021, suicide prevention is not about numbers. Every life lost to suicide is one too many. Suicide prevention is an all-hands, community effort that starts with a commitment to total, holistic sailor wellness, including physical and psychological health, a sense of purpose, and a strong support network. Encouraging commands to foster environments where sailors can excel, advance, and ask for help is the first step in preventing suicide.

The entire Navy community must actively uphold a culture that views seeking help as a sign of strength, fosters resilience, takes action to prevent stress illness, strengthens protective factors, recognizes risk factors and warning signs early, and proactively intervenes when a sailor is experiencing increased stress or a psychological health crisis. We actively address the interpersonal problems associated with suicide through updated policies, programs, campaigns, and training. Key initiatives include:

- Expanding the embedded Mental Health Program, Navy increased the percentage of embedded Mental Health providers in operational units from 25 percent in 2019 to 36 percent in 2021;
- Increasing deck-plate leadership through Expanded Operational Stress Control (E-OSC) training led by Command Resilience Teams;
- Continuing to offer the Sailor Assistance and Intercept for Life program that provides rapid assistance, ongoing risk management, care coordination, and reintegration assistance for servicemembers identified with a suicide ideation or a suicide attempt;
- Providing tailored Gatekeeper training to the key communities who tend to interact more often with sailors who are at a heightened risk for suicide; and
- Providing gun locks to sailors and family members as part of our ongoing lethal means safety efforts. Gun locks have been proven effective towards reduction of suicides by delaying individual's access to a firearm when they are at risk.

Navy's COE Integrated Primary Prevention strategy focuses on building toughness and resilience in sailors, their families, civilians, and Navy Commands. Primary Prevention is implemented through the Cultural Champion Network and aims to promote healthy relationships and decision making by enhancing protective factors such as Signature Behaviors and preventing counter-productive or destructive behaviors. Additionally, Navy has rolled out the new E-OSC program, a peer-to-peer program that expands on previous OSC efforts using evidence-based resilience techniques to teach sailors how to persevere, adapt, and grow through the challenges they face. Navy has engaged industry experts to develop surveys to gain insight into the levels of trust and connectedness Navy-wide and unit specific data. These factors are proven to help in the reduction of destructive behaviors, assisting in the overall goal of increased performance, and readiness in the Fleet.

#### *Effects-based DEI*

Two years ago, the CNO created Task Force One Navy to analyze and evaluate issues that detract from Navy readiness, such as racism, sexism, and other structural and interpersonal biases. The report recommendations have been incorporated into an enduring framework under the COE DEI Initiatives. To date, of the original 56 recommendations, 27 have been implemented, 27 are in progress, and two have been cancelled. These implemented recommendations resulted in:

- Increasing advertising funding for underrepresented communities from 20 to 25 percent.
- Coordinating 16 TYCOM adjunct outreach events per year with underrepresented communities.
- Ensuring 50 percent of nominative packages submitted are from diverse candidates.
- Awarding 32 NROTC side-load scholarships to diverse applicants.
- Sending eight RSs to the Paul Mitchell School to improve ability to cut and style the hair of diverse sailors in the Fleet.
- Implementing Naval Horizon virtual essay contest for high school students to strengthen outreach to K-12 STEM students, leading to 12,000+ YouTube views and 617 applicants.
- Conducting a rigorous study of Non-Judicial Punishment (NJP) data to statistically determine if discrimination is present in NJP proceedings.

- Partnering with several civilian DEI counterparts to share DEI best practices, to include a Necessary Conversations Guide and a Bias Mitigation Tool.
- Re-establishing the Office of Women's Policy to focus on areas of recruitment and retention of servicewomen, which includes liaising with key stakeholders to include Affinity Groups and the Defense Advisory Committee on Women in the Services.

These efforts ensure the Navy becomes more inclusive as it becomes more diverse. Indeed, recent survey data shows these initiatives are improving the Navy's measures of inclusion. The percentage of Health of the Force survey respondents agreeing:

- "Navy has authentic commitment to inclusion" increased from 47 percent in 2019 to 52 percent in 2021.
- "Racism is NOT a problem in the Navy" increased from 28 percent in 2020 to 38 percent in 2021. This metric improved across all races by five percent or more.
- "Sailors who report sexual harassment and/or discrimination do not have to worry about retaliation" has increased from 42 percent in 2020 to 62 percent in 2021.

Assessing diversity trends over the past 15 years, we can confidently say these efforts and measurements will become increasingly important into the future as the Navy will become more demographically diverse. Over the past 15 years:

- In the officer community, racial diversity has increased from 16.7 percent to 23 percent of the population, gender diversity has increased from 14.8 percent to 20.6 percent, and ethnic diversity has increased from 5.4 percent to 8.9 percent. Junior enlisted sailors are more likely to serve under a Division Officer who is female or diverse than serve under a white male officer (47.3 percent of junior Surface Warfare Officer are white, non-Hispanic male).
- In the enlisted community, racial diversity has increased from 37 percent to 40 percent of the population, gender diversity has increased from 14.8 percent to 20.7 percent, and ethnic diversity has increased from 14 percent to 18.3 percent.

While diversity metrics tend to focus on race, gender, and ethnicity, Navy leaders always emphasize that it is also about where we are from, different experiences and career paths, educational backgrounds, and how we approach and solve problems. Leveraging all areas of diversity in an inclusive manner is key to making sure that our Navy sailors and teams can out think, outperform, and out fight any adversary.

#### *Supporting our Families*

Navy families are an integral part of our Navy team and a vital contributor to mission success. MyNavy HR and our Fleet and Family Support Centers (FFSC) are committed to delivering better services and support that are dedicated to the health and well-being of our families. We have worked diligently to ensure our families are provided service delivery options that are immediately accessible, whether in person, virtual or remote locations to include:

- Providing relevant, up-to-date services that keep families informed;
- Providing a service delivery model that meets families where they are;
- Implementing improvements to the Exceptional Family Member Program (EFMP) and establishing a single EFMP headquarters office at Navy Personnel Command (NPC). The model includes co-locating program leads from all four EFMP components at NPC (Policy, Assignments, Family Support, and Identification, Enrollment and Disenrollment) and consolidating staffing to better meet our families' needs;
- Providing special education attorney support to our Exceptional Family Member (EFM) sailors and families. To date, over 515 EFMs have received support covering the legal aspects of special education, resources, the FFSC Toolkit, and Individual Education Plan support;
- Reimbursing spouse licensure fees incurred due to a permanent change of station (PCS) move for spouses with an average payment of \$399;
- Releasing and updating the MyNavy Family mobile application with input from spouses to identify, consolidate, and standardize information available into one authoritative source. This past year we provided updated information on economic food insecurity.

#### OPTIMIZING TALENT MANAGEMENT

To generate an effective fighting force, Navy needs to identify, develop, and shape sailor performance to meet our current and future mission objectives. We continue to expand our Talent Marketplace, creating a modern, flexible, and transparent assignment process that more effectively balances a sailor's assignment, location, and advancement opportunity with the Navy's mission and operational needs. Simulta-

neously, we are improving the delivery and accessibility of HR Services to sailors and families. Our goal is to maximize the efficiencies and value of our services in order to produce more effective Warfighters and enhance warfighting readiness.

#### *Enlisted Talent Management*

In 2016, Navy implemented Billet Based Distribution to efficiently assign personnel in support of warfighting readiness by matching sailors to specific billets based on rating, paygrade, and Navy Enlisted Classification Codes (NEC). Building on this effort, we continue to develop a more robust talent marketplace focused on flexible, streamlined, and responsive community and career management. We are moving towards a talent management approach that prioritizes individual strengths, skill portfolios, such as proficiency and experience, and development to align with the Navy's needs.

Navy end strength has shifted from a growth to a sustainment profile, while continuing to prioritize filling sea duty billets and retaining the right mix of ratings, paygrades, and skillsets to meet the mission. We continue to develop a robust marketplace with an eye on optimizing Fleet readiness, through our efforts to fill priority requirements with the best-qualified sailors by:

- Maximizing reenlistment opportunities for all retention-eligible sailors and expanding conversion opportunities for sailors to move from overmanned to undermanned ratings to help balance community health.
- Broadening advancement opportunities for sailors to fill priority billets via Advance-to-Position (A2P), incentivizing service in priority or hard-to-fill billets across the Fleet by advancing sailors who fill them to the next pay grade, while maintaining our Meritorious Advancement Program (MAP) to spot advance top talent.
- Stabilizing the current accession mission to sustain end strength requirements, as the previously recruited enlisted accessions are arriving to the Fleet to address apprentice pay band gaps.
- Continuing production of optimal by-rating community health plan to rebalance ratings within 98–102 percent of inventory-to-Enlisted Programmed Authorizations by the end of any given fiscal year.
- Continuing utilization of RC personnel supplementing the AC workforce. Navy recalled over 200 Reserve sailors to help with the recruiting mission—training recruits at boot camp and entry-level schoolhouses—and to fill vacant/gapped sea duty manning requirements with experienced and technically-proficient sailors.
- Continuing to evolve A2P incentives via the distribution system. The MyNavy Assignment (MNA) system advertises opportunities for E–4 and E–5 sailors to permanently advance to the next paygrade by accepting orders to critical sea and high-priority shore-duty billets.
- Expanding opportunities for sailors to receive special and incentive pays, such as Selective Reenlistment Bonuses (SRB) and Sea Duty Incentive Pay, to help with sea-duty manning.
- Maximizing High Year Tenure waiver opportunities for sailors who want to remain at sea, go to sea, or remain in critical ratings and NECs.

MyNavy HR continues to leverage A2P, a program that started with 15 advertised billets in October 2019 and has matured to a consistent 75 advertised billets each MNA cycle. As of October 2021, MyNavy HR has seen over 400 sailors selected for advancement under the program. It has also expanded to include shore duty positions at RTC, overseas duty stations, and certain instructor billets. MyNavy HR will evolve the program to include filling critical billets in operational units. While Navy Wide Advancement Exams currently remain the primary path for advancement, accounting for approximately 74 percent of total advancements, we continue to refine the execution of Meritorious Advancement, which empowers our Command Triads to identify and reward high-performing, technically proficient sailors through accelerated advancement.

In late 2020, MyNavy HR, with the support of Fleet and TYCOMs, established the Detailing Marketplace Campaign Plan (DMCP) to fundamentally transform enlisted talent management across the Navy. This multi-year plan will provide improved structure to address systemic issues contributing to Fleet gaps and billet mismatches that limit sailor career planning and flexibility. The campaign plan established specific goals to improve Fleet manning; enhance incentive systems; improve career management via skill and expertise-based promotion and an A2P policy to improve at-sea command flexibility; improve sailor experience; and integrate personnel policies across MyNavy HR.

The Detailing Marketplace Assignment Policy (DMAP) represents a significant unifying line of effort within the DMCP, bringing together rotation timing and ele-

ments of incentives and advancements. At its core, DMAP replaces long established policy to limit sea duty tours to 60 months with a system of monetary and non-monetary incentives including A2P, to better man our sea duty commands. The 60-month limitation is a significant contributor to systemic gaps at sea for sea-intensive ratings since the limitation is not aligned with the realities of the billet base and Navy needs. These policy-induced gaps amplify the already arduous nature of sea duty due to under-manning in operational units. For ratings under DMAP, Command Advancement to Position (CA2P) replaces MAP advancement opportunities, allowing commanding officers to reward top performers with both advancement and geographic stability via a guaranteed follow-on assignment at the same unit. In December 2021, we announced implementation of DMAP Phase 1. DMAP Phase 1 commenced on March 1, 2022 for four sea-intensive ratings. This represents the first step towards a truly dynamic, sailor focused Detailing Marketplace that will improve Fleet readiness and enrich sailors' careers.

In fiscal year 2022, we have shifted our focus towards developing capabilities linking reenlistment and extension decisions with assignments and efforts to integrate MNA with the Navy Pay and Personnel system via the Offer, Accept, Obligate (OAO) policy initiative. OAO will modify enlisted contract management, making it an Officer-like model, which amends reenlistment control policy by tying obligated service to acceptance of orders, and the associated tour length. Negotiating for assignment indicates intent to reenlist or extend. Acceptance of assignment will constitute agreement to reenlist/extend and accept an obligation for the prescribed tour length. Some exceptions are provided for sailors eligible for SRB; they may reenlist for longer periods—beyond the tour of duty—to maximize the monetary benefits received.

In December 2021, we delivered MNA 4.8c, which provides sailors visibility into rating conversion opportunities and the ability to apply for specific billets in a different rating. Sailors selected to a billet are converted to the new rating at the same time. This process provides more transparency for the sailor, meets the needs of the Navy, and streamlines the rating conversion process.

#### *Enlisted Retention*

Although fiscal year 2022 aggregate end strength requirements are slightly lower than fiscal year 2021, we continue to retain the right talent, with the right mix of skills, in the right communities to ensure we have the personnel needed to maintain our advantage at sea. Our retention levels exceeded Zone A (0–6 years) forecasts and fell slightly below levels forecasted in Zones B (6–10 years) and C (10–14 years). While retention behavior shows sailors are choosing to wait until closer to their End of Active Obligated Service to make a reenlistment decision, overall retention during fiscal year 2021 remained strong.

Building upon the retention gains of the last few years, Navy remains committed to retaining the right talent and experience in the right pay grades and ratings. We remain mindful of current economic conditions and the potential impact on our ability to retain sailors. Competition for talent remains high, with continued challenges in the high-demand and low-density communities of nuclear, information warfare, and special warfare. The nuclear community in particular observed a downward trend in retention over the past 2 years in Zone B. To improve this behavior, the nuclear community adjusted its sea/shore flow career path to improve alignment between the sea/shore rotation and Zone B SRB eligibility requirements.

Overall, we continue to use monetary and non-monetary incentives – bonuses, special duty assignment pays, and high-year tenure waivers – to keep talented individuals in the Navy.

#### *Officer Talent Management*

Competition for officer talent remains significant as we continue to use every tool to recruit America's top talent into our officer corps, train them with cutting-edge technology and techniques, and retain their expertise to preserve our competitive advantage in the global security environment. MyNavy HR continues to utilize the expanded authorities of the Defense Officer Personnel Management Act provided by Congress to enhance our ability to attract and retain a talented officer corps and includes:

- Promotion Merit Reorder permits placement of those selected for promotion at the top of the list, demonstrating the value and primacy of merit over time in service. The Secretary of the Navy has authorized up to 15 percent of those selected for promotion for merit reorder. We continue to utilize this authority during our Active Duty promotion selection boards and have expanded the use for our Navy Reserve promotion selection boards in fiscal year 2021. Additionally,

Navy Reserve promotion selection boards will now consider below zone officers, starting in fiscal year 2022.

- 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. Modified career paths provide needed expertise to the Fleet. Boards selected eleven Captains for continuation to fill shortages in the Defense/Naval Attaché, Acquisition Corps and Judge Advocate General Corps communities. Additionally, we have conducted six Professional Flight Instructor (PFI) boards, yielding 53 PFIs slated out of 245 applicants. This career path initiative allows highly-qualified pilots and naval flight officers to serve continuously as flight instructors beyond their department head milestone.
- Opt-out of promotion board consideration permits officers to opt-out/defer from a statutory promotion board to complete a career broadening assignment, advanced education, or a career progression requirement delayed by one of these assignments (e.g., White House Fellows, Marshall, Rhodes, or Olmsted Scholars). Navy has approved 42 officers to opt-out of promotion consideration (7 for the fiscal year 2021 promotion cycle, 14 for the fiscal year 2022 promotion cycle and 21 for the fiscal year 2023 promotion cycle).
- Expanded officer spot promotion authority continues to facilitate filling at-sea and operational O-5 and O-6 billets with officers possessing critical skills such as post-operational or operational command executive leadership. Two spot promote boards were convened in fiscal year 2021 to fill 14 O-5 and 22 O-6 billets.
- Expanded constructive service credit for initial accessions allow officers with specific education requirements to be accessed at senior pay grades for Active Cyber Warfare Engineer and Engineering Duty Officer as well as Reserve Cryptologic Warfare and Information Professional competitive categories. MyNavy HR continues to refine skillset requirements as needs evolve to maximize usage of this program for qualified potential officer candidates. Currently, Reserve Cyber Warfare (CW) and Information Professional (IP) Direct Commission Officers have been accessed through this authority. Out of 58 candidates reviewed for constructive service credit, 34 candidates were commissioned (9 CW (6 LTs and 3 LTJGs) and 25 IP (3 LTs and 22 LTJGs)).

The MyNavy HR Talent Management Task Force is currently in the testing phase of the development and implementation of the Navy Command Leadership Assessment and Selection Program (NCLASP). NCLASP is an effort to create a more effective process to select the best and the brightest future Navy leaders with the goal of supplementing the existing command screening boards and making a good process even more robust. The current and primary focus is on completing scientifically valid job analyses to define each community’s definitions of leadership before assessments are integrated into leadership decision making. Personality and cognitive assessments have been administered for data collection, program development, and validation. These are standard assessments utilized in personnel selection programs in both the military and civilian corporate sector. In the future, the purpose of these assessments will be to identify leadership strengths and vulnerabilities related to the job role to aide in smarter, data-driven talent management.

Navy Command Screen Administrative Selection Boards have been an efficient process to select future Navy commanders for many years, but they traditionally rely on information about the candidates that is limited in nature. Specifically, when officers are selected for command, an administrative board made up of community-specific leaders briefly reviews each officer’s record of performance and based on that information the board votes on where the candidate falls within a rank order of other candidates. This process has been effective, but does not paint the full picture of the candidate in terms of leadership attributes and potential. NCLASP is intended to augment the command qualification process and/or the Administrative Command Screen Board to provide human factor, data-driven information to inform leadership decision making and talent management. Navy does not envision this as a substitute for the screening process, but rather an enhancement to provide more fidelity into the results and assist in the leadership selection and slating process.

Naval Special Warfare (NSW) has implemented NCLASP at the O4–O6 and senior enlisted level, and three additional Navy communities are participating in NCLASP pilots to include the Explosive Ordnance Disposal community, Submarine Force, and Surface Forces, with a pilot for the aviation community that is currently in the early planning stages for June 2022. The vision for program sustainment is to embed operational psychology teams within major commands to develop, manage, and execute NCLASP tailored for the needs and goals of that community, based on robust scientific rigor, with centralized oversight at NPC to ensure consistency and

effectiveness of the program over time. Lessons learned from the pilots that have been executed thus far have paved the way for a comprehensive roll out plan that will tailor the program to the unique needs of each TYCOM while maintaining the gold standards of personnel selection science.

It is essential that we place our best talent in leadership roles that will have the greatest impact on our warfighting imperatives. NCLASP has the potential to make a substantial positive impact on the Navy by providing decision makers with a flexible, community-driven program with new and more pertinent information for selection and slating. Increasing the likelihood of placing those who have the best attributes for essential leadership positions and passing on those who are least suited will ensure that the best leaders are selected for the right jobs. This will reduce the impact to the Fleet due to misconduct and toxic leadership, and promoting a culture of leadership that will produce an even stronger, more lethal Navy.

#### *Officer Retention and Flag Officer Reductions*

Although officer continuation remains strong in meeting community milestone requirements, we are experiencing increased challenges in several critical communities. As in previous years, retention of aviation warfare officers in specific type/model/series platforms, conventional Surface Warfare Officer, submarine officers, and NSW officers remains challenging. Offering precisely targeted incentive pays and bonuses, coupled with non-monetary incentives, such as the Career Intermission Program, Dual Military Spouse Co-location and High School Senior Stabilization assignment policy, remains essential to maintaining and improving manning in these mission-essential specialties.

At the O-6 level, the opportunity for selection to flag officer is a retention tool that will be further reduced in 2023 as Navy reduces 14 billets in accordance with the reductions mandated in the fiscal year 2017 NDAA, Navy's support to establish the Space Force, and the additional billet required for the special prosecutor mandated in the fiscal year 2022 NDAA. Currently, of all the Services Navy has the lowest flag officer to O-6 ratio resulting in the lowest opportunity for selection to O-7. Following these reductions, this ratio will be even lower. By the end of 2022, Navy will have reduced more than nine percent of flag officer billets. These disproportionate cuts come at a high cost to maintaining operational readiness, impede Navy's efforts in an already challenging operational environment, and run counter to the demands of the long-term strategic competition the nation faces, which require more rather than less senior uniformed leadership and expertise in the dominant physical domain of concern, the maritime domain.

To the detriment of the Navy enterprise and the Joint Force, the reduction of one and two star Navy staff positions reduces development opportunities for junior warfighter flag officers and limits the enterprise expertise they can only gain outside of warfighting billets, in areas such as financial management, strategic plans and policy, strategic warfare, and operations analysis. This expertise is gained primarily in junior flag officer staff positions. Removing these eliminates development opportunities used to groom one and two star admirals for future positions as three and four star admirals.

The reduced number of flag officer billets has resulted in shifting work to other flag officers and Senior Executives, increasing demands on executive bandwidth and expanding span of control while forcing the double and triple hatting of positions. At present, nearly one third of the Navy's remaining 149 flag officer billets will be double or triple hatted with some positions having more than a dozen direct reports.

#### MAINTAINING OPERATIONAL READINESS

MyNavy HR continues to focus our energy on ensuring the Fleet is properly manned. All of our efforts to attract, develop, and manage our sailors are to build a Navy that can fight and win in long-term strategic competition.

#### *End Strength*

Navy's AC personnel requirements are driven by platform investments and support capabilities that support the National Defense Strategy and maintain our warfighting advantage to defend our Nation for decades to come. We concluded fiscal year 2021 with 347,677 end strength, and are working to achieve the fiscal year 2022 authorized end strength of 346,920. The President's fiscal year 2023 budget request fully funds sustainment of Navy's required end strength of 346,300, which is essential to provide the Fleet with the capabilities to engage in any long-term strategic competition that threatens our security and way of life, support our ability to focus on readiness, capabilities, capacity, and our sailors. Navy's strength comes from the efforts of the 346,300 Active and 57,700 Reserve sailors and their families.

This request reflects sustainment in military personnel requirements driven by Navy's force structure along with enabling and support required capabilities.

#### *Fleet Manning*

The number of sailors on operational sea duty in fiscal year 2022 is at the highest level since 2014, and since 2017 Navy has 10,000 more sailors at sea for all sea duty units. Additionally, we grew our accessions from ~31,000 in fiscal year 2016 to a peak of ~40,000 in fiscal year 2020 to man operational platforms, improving unit readiness and lethality. Since March 2020, Navy funded ~7,600 additional sea billets and has placed ~5,200 more sailors in sea billets. Despite decreasing Force Structure, Navy will continue to fund more at-sea requirements to increase manning at sea.

As we continue to optimize our workforce and address shortfalls in the future, 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:

- Increased enlistment bonuses for new accessions to combat a challenging recruiting environment and streamlined training pipelines to deliver a greater percentage of our recruits to sea duty faster. As of March 4, 2022, 22,342 sailors are in the accession/student pipelines. We continue to closely monitor their progress to the Fleet, and Navy has gained significant efficiencies in our supply chain by reducing overall initial training attrition from 19 percent in fiscal year 2018 to 11 percent in fiscal year 2021, increasing our ability to send more trained and ready sailors to the Fleet faster.
- Expanded the SRB program targeting retention in critical skills and paygrades as required.
- Implemented sea duty incentive pays and DMAP to better align sea duty tour lengths with the billet base and available sailors and increased use of High Year Tenure waivers to retain sailors who would otherwise be forced to separate if they chose to accept a sea duty assignment.
- Expanded A2P opportunities across the force with focus on filling on high priority and sea intensive billets.
- Implemented senior enlisted optimization to manually correct misalignments by taking sailor and Navy needs into account to reassign E7–E9 sailors to billets commensurate with their rank to ensure the most experienced sailors are aligned to billets that need their training, leadership, and experience based on real-time fleet priorities.

We will continue to experience shortfalls in Fleet manning as we implement new force management levers to address some of the systemic issues in our current closed-loop military manpower and personnel system, but we remain committed to investing in manpower and implementing policies to improve and sustain fleet readiness.

#### *Reserve Activations*

In partnership with the Chief of Navy Reserve, we are aligning Navy's Reserve activation processes with national strategic priorities and the Navy's force design. We use our RC for critical roles based on the member's Reserve billet and tailored training rather than as Individual Augmentees (IA). We developed the adaptive mobilization construct to accelerate delivery of decisive capability to the fight. Adaptive Mobilization increases Reserve mobilization throughput by distributing activation processes across Navy Reserve Activities. Aligning Reserve mobilizations to Navy's force design rather than IA requirements, improving activation processing efficiency, and increasing the standing mobilization readiness of our forces will contribute to more effective strategic deterrence in competition and a more lethal Navy in conflict.

#### MYNAVY HR SERVICE DELIVERY

After attracting, developing, and managing our talent to man the Fleet, we must provide sailors and their families with better human resources services delivery. Our transformation efforts continue to progress by replacing decades' worth of unchanged processes and outdated technology with a modern, world-class personnel services delivery system. Although transformation on this scale takes time, in 2021 we made significant progress toward our future state vision. Throughout fiscal year 2021, we continued to develop and refine the HR Tiered Service Delivery Model to enable MyNavy Career Center (MNCC) to better serve sailors.

#### *MyNavy Career Center*

In fiscal year 2021, the MyNavy HR MNCC was established as a one-star command, merging the Pay and Personnel Management Department, Human Resources

Service Center, and Navy Pay and Personnel Support Center into one organization to better serve sailors and their families with top-notch customer service for personnel and pay transactions. Additionally, the Command Pay and Personnel Administrator (CPPA) Pro Cell was established at the Human Resources Service Center (HRSC) to assist CPPAs and command triads throughout the Navy by providing training and information, transparency into pay and personnel transactions, travel voucher breakdown, and mission critical Government Travel Charge Card authorizations and assistance with case resolution.

*Navy Personnel and Pay (NP2)*

Development of the NP2 system, an auditable, cloud-hosted software suite, enabling Treasury-Direct Disbursement and a single pay source for all sailors, remains one of our highest transformation priority. For the first time, NP2 will integrate the Navy's personnel and pay systems for both the AC and RC and will provide sailors access to accurate personnel and pay information in one easy-to-use location. MyNavy HR continues to analyze and modernize every personnel process with an eye toward efficiency and simplicity. Introducing these new capabilities is ongoing and we will occasionally experience challenges as a normal part of such a significant system upgrade. The recent migration of two of our oldest systems, Navy Enlisted System (NES) and Officer Personnel Information System (OPINS), gave us real time information on where workarounds, system patches, and internal processes done over the years were not properly documented. As a result, some capabilities were not addressed in the new system, thus having a negative impact on sailor pay and benefits. However, the MyNavy HR team was quick to respond as we identified and resolved issues impacting sailors in the days after the systems transitioned. Leveraging the lessons learned, we shifted the NP2 program from calendar-based to an events-based delivery schedule, which allows time for test and evaluation of a full range of considerations to mitigate the risk of transition of Navy's personnel and pay processes. We remain fully committed to delivering NP2 modernization to our sailors and their families.

MyPCS Mobile continues to provide Sailors Common Access Card-free mobile access to PCS-related information and resources using their personal mobile devices with commercial-grade, multi-factor authentication. Features include a tailored PCS checklist, PCS Entitlements calculator, the ability to apply for government housing and childcare, a set of lean orders sailors can view on a mobile device, and the ability to submit PCS travel vouchers electronically from a mobile device utilizing an electronic signature. This capability significantly enhances the PCS experience for our sailors and their families. Since rollout, over one-million MyPCS accounts have been created. Before MyPCS, between 25 and 40 percent of PCS travel claims were rejected and returned back to members. Now, MyPCS has revolutionized travel claims processing, resulting in no rejections for claims submitted through MyPCS since the application provides drop-down menus that prevent a sailor from submitting an incomplete claim. In February, MyPCS travel voucher started being utilized to submit PCS travel claims.

CONCLUSION

The Secretary of the Navy and the CNO have established enduring priorities that center on Empowering Our People and developing a seasoned team of naval warriors, which we will achieve through our talent management optimization, education and leadership development continuum, and cultivating a Culture of Excellence, where everyone is treated with dignity and respect. We will continue to provide exceptional service to our sailors and their families by providing a modernized sailor experience as we transform our legacy personnel and pay systems, bringing MyNavy HR into the 21st Century. 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 very much, Vice Admiral. Next is Lieutenant General David Ottignon, Deputy Commandant of the Marine Corps for Manpower and Reserve Affairs.

**STATEMENT OF LIEUTENANT GENERAL DAVID OTTIGNON,  
USMC, DEPUTY COMMANDANT FOR MANPOWER AND RE-  
SERVE AFFAIRS, UNITED STATES MARINE CORPS**

Lieutenant General OTTIGNON. Chairwoman Gillibrand, Ranking Member Tillis, and distinguished Members of the Subcommittee,



thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today to discuss your Marines. I have submitted a written statement, so my opening comments will be brief.

We have to decisively stepped out on a talent management design and modernization effort to increase the lethality of your Marine Corps to fight and win when called upon by the Nation. Talent Management 2030 was released in support of the Commandant's Force Design Plan. Accomplishing the course force design will not be possible without highly skilled, mature, and mentally tough Marines.

The strategic plans are interdependent and foundational to the success of the Marine Corps. The end product will be a force that is better equipped to fight and win in an increasingly high tech, complex operating environment. The statutory authorities that Congress has granted has streamlined some of these efforts, and we thank you for your support. Other initiatives will require more study and take time to implement, and we remain committed to getting this right.

The way we recruit and retain our focus areas in Talent Management 2030, and while we are on track to make our accession goals, this is arguably the most challenging recruiting year since the inception of the All-Volunteer Force. Looking forward, we will need to be innovative and adapt to these challenges and be agile in our approach.

I would like to highlight our commitment to the implementation of the recommendations from the Independent Review Commission approved by the Secretary of Defense. Working closely with the Department of the Navy and the Office of the Secretary of Defense, we are moving out quickly to establish the Office of Special Trial Counsel, as well as additive preventive workforce, and enhance victim care, and support improvements.

We will continue to keep Congress informed as we make progress. My final point today is that taking care of Marines and their family remains paramount.

We continue to invest both in prevention programs to reduce destructive behaviors across the force, family readiness programs like parental leave, childcare, spousal employment, and our gold standard Exceptional Family Member Program, are essential to the readiness of our force. We know that we recruit Marines, but we retain the family.

I am proud to represent your Marines, their families, and our civilian employees, and I look forward to answering your questions.

[The prepared statement of Lieutenant General David A. Ottignon follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT BY LIEUTENANT GENERAL DAVID A. OTTIGNON

#### 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 personnel.

### *Background*

The Marine Corps has been in the talent management business since its creation. We have always strived to recruit and retain the best and brightest of our Nation's youth and have proven very successful at meeting our recruiting and retention goals with the right marines, in the right billets, at the right time; and with a force representative of the American people—a force that is now over 43 percent diverse. However, our legacy personnel system was designed in the industrial era with assumptions about human capital which are now superseded by modern technological advantages of the information age. While improved upon over the years, this system is not well suited for the cultural and technological changes of today's world and tomorrow's marines.

Talent Management 2030 (TM2030) describes a fundamental redesign of this system, empowered by the new statutory authorities provided by Congress, at a critical juncture for change. We are grateful for the additional authorities provided by Congress to enable us to better serve our servicemembers, their families, and our Nation. TM2030 details how the Marine Corps will implement new models for recruiting and retaining 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. The vision for 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. It will empower marines and improve transparency, objectivity, and flexibility in their careers. With a modernized talent management system, we will better harness, develop, and compete for the unique skills and strengths demanded of marines.

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. One of our first actions after publication of TM2030 was to leverage strategic-minded innovators to think through our talent management issues and provide resource-informed planning to organizational change. This group reports directly to the Commandant of the Marine Corps, but is co-located with the Marine Corps service personnel chief at Manpower & Reserve Affairs in Quantico for optimal effectiveness. The Talent Management Strategy Group (TMX) will be the leading organization to challenge orthodoxy and create an intellectual environment of strategic talent management.

Currently, 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.

### *Build and Retain*

*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 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 likeliness 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 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 tool the Marine Corps is using to help identify a recruit's potential for service in the Marine Corps. 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, and the sharing of this data with a marine's future command team will ultimately provide for a better informed and aware leadership structure around every American who joins our Corps.

CCAT is similar to the newly developed TAPAS; it is designed to assess a marine officer's aptitudes and traits in order to better align them to PMOS placement at The Basic School. In concert with the other assessment tools, CCAT will begin to place marines of diverse backgrounds into occupational specialties across the warfighting functions of the Marine Corps. The end state of this effort will be a talented marine placed into a specialty most aligned to their natural talents and traits, with an expected benefit of rapid growth of skill and maturity—ultimately resulting in a higher retention of marine officers of higher skill.

*Lateral Entry (Pilot Program)*—In TM2030, the Commandant made known his intent to apply the lateral entry authorities granted to us from Congress to provide “an open door for exceptionally talented Americans who wish to join the Marine Corps, allowing them to laterally enter at a rank appropriate to their education, experience, and ability.” Such an open door would “be limited and primarily reserved for recruiting highly qualified applicants in select specialties, not used as a means to recruit en masse.” Currently, the Marine Corps is exploring courses of action to make use of these authorities by offering constructive service credit to officer candidates who possess graduate-level education, certifications, and experience in certain high-demand career fields. Furthermore, the scope and accession model will be open to prior-service recruitment—capitalizing on those marines that left service as a non-commissioned officer, earned a degree or gained extensive experience, ultimately invited back to service as a senior non-commissioned officer or officer.

#### *Manage and Develop*

*Talent Marketplace*—Our Talent Management Engagement Portal (TMPEP) 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 and artificial intelligence and machine learning elements to support a market-style assignment system. It will allow for more informed career decisions throughout a marine's career with information on billet availability, popularity, comparative assessments, and other information. Currently, this information is stored in several separate legacy systems, which limit transparency and ease of use. TMPEP will solve these data management challenges. Through an agile development approach backed by necessary resourcing, we will have a fully operational talent marketplace fielded to the fleet—process. At full integration, it will use advanced analytics and artificial intelligence and machine learning elements to support a market-style assignment system. It will allow for more informed career decisions throughout a marine's career with information on billet availability, popularity, comparative assessments, and other information. Currently, this information is stored in several separate legacy systems, which limit transparency and ease of use. TMPEP will solve these data management challenges. Through an agile development approach backed by necessary resourcing, we will have a fully operational talent marketplace fielded to the fleet—at speed.

*Permanent Change of Station (PCS) Flexibility*—PCS moves, while essential, are disruptive to marines and their families, impact spousal employment and child and family education, and can create financial distress. Since at least 2019, 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. 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.

*360 Degree Leadership Review Program*—The goal of this initiative is to improve leadership effectiveness by identifying blind spots and areas of improvement for personal growth. It will use an industry-developed, researched-backed tool that ulti-

mately will help leaders identify their strengths and weaknesses through honest feedback from their supervisors, peers, and subordinates. An initial pilot of the program is scheduled for execution in 2022, with expansion to wider populations through 2024.

*Promotion Opt Out*—We appreciate this statutory authority provided by Congress; we’ve incorporated it into TM2030 to create or enable career paths to 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. This authority will be implemented in our fiscal year 2024 promotion boards, which are executed in this calendar year.

#### *Inform and Interface*

*IT Systems Modernization.* One of the most vital, but often overlooked, aspect of virtually every Marine Corps’ talent management initiative involves its information technology systems. The systems and applications the Marine Corps employ now to build and sustain the most lethal fighting force possible rides on decades-old technology than spans over 70 disparate applications and databases. Modernizing our IT portfolio will consist of consolidating these 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. We have already made great strides in migrating the Manpower Information Portal (MIP) into a single cloud hosted IT system that supports 51 applications, 5 services, and 8 databases to facilitate manpower functions and enable TM2030. The migration of the MIP to cloud services has positioned us to implement agile development practices to further optimize its human resource applications. 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. Our monitors will continue to provide marines with intimate, transparent mentorship, traveling to every major Marine installation in the world. This ensures that our marines have the most up-to-date information on policies affecting their assignments and promotions. It also ensures that every marine who wants to meet with their monitor has an opportunity to have an in-depth conversation about their next assignment and their career, often with their family by their side. This human interaction is crucial to matching our talent to professionally-rewarding and personally-supportable 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 PMOS schools is being explored through our Enhanced Shipping Model. 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 personnel 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.

*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. The Service executed the ECRB virtually last year during fiscal year 2021, for subsequent term or career marines seeking reenlistment in fast-filling MOSs. 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 virtual 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. Digital Board Room

2.0 has the capability to fully execute virtual selection boards which will enhance the Marine Corps' ability to execute boards in a distributed fashion while safeguarding this critical talent management process. The introduction of virtual boards in no small way increased and further strengthened our partnership and transparency with the Fleet Marine Force. This ensures that our senior enlisted leaders have a larger impact on retaining our most talented marines.

*Crowdsourcing*—We recently reached out to our marines and solicited ideas from across the Marine Corps to gain a better understanding of our marines' personnel policy perspectives. For example, we have asked for Corps-wide input on what non-monetary incentives would influence their decision to remain in the Marine Corps. Previous themes have focused on career development, assignments, leave policies, promotions, and daily living conditions (barracks, mess halls, etc.). We received over 700 suggestions and reviewed them for feasibility. Feedback shows many ideas focus on enhancing marines' opportunities to attend career-enhancing schools and on expanding PCS flexibility.

#### RECRUITING

All Marine Corps recruiting efforts—officer, enlisted, regular, Reserve, and prior-service—fall under the Marine Corps Recruiting Command. This is unique amongst the services. Operationally, this provides us with tremendous flexibility and unity of command, facilitating efforts to meet accession and end strength requirements.

Last fiscal year, COVID-19 impacted recruiting efforts. Social distancing requirements limited the capacity at our depots, delayed shipping activities, closed schools, and canceled community events that we depend on for personal contacts and outreach. We adjusted to these challenges by exploring new digital prospecting tools and researching the market reactions to those endeavors. These actions gave recruiters the means to operate in a reduced personal contact environment. We made mission last year; however, fiscal year 2022 has proved to be arguably the most challenging year in recruiting history. In addition to COVID-19, the growing disconnect and declining favorable view between the U.S. population and traditional institutions, labor shortages, high inflation, and a population of youth who do not see the value of military service also continue to strain recruiting efforts and place the Marine Corps' accession mission at risk.

Despite the challenges, the quality of your marines remains exceptionally high. The Department of Defense 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). Last year, the Marine Corps achieved over 99 percent for Education Tier 1, and over 70 percent for Mental Group I-III A. We expect to exceed DOD standards in fiscal year 2022, despite the continued environment.

To meet the challenges ahead, 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 more diverse force. Approximately 47 percent of our recruiters have a diverse background, well above our Nation's demographics as a whole. Our recruiting efforts connect marines with the communities they represent. We have recruiters assigned to every zip code in our Nation, and constantly strive to reach all qualified youth and their influencers - from the most rural of small towns to the largest of cities.

For future recruiting success, we must continue to adequately fund both recruiting operations and advertising; we thank Congress for its support in this goal. 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. To help improve our recruiting challenges, we ask for Congress' support for expanded authority to modernize our ability to reach out to prospective recruits with information on military service.

#### RETENTION

The essence of Marine Corps talent management is to retain the very best marines capable of fulfilling our leadership and operational needs. Overall, we met our retention goals in fiscal year 2021, and are on track for fiscal year 2022. However, there is a continuous challenge to keep high-quality marines in the service, especially in the current competitive civilian job market. 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 Reserve should the need arise.

In general, we believe that military pay is very competitive, especially once you take into consideration all of the accompanying benefits such as housing and medical care. 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 percentile. We appreciate Congress' passage of the new Basic Needs Allowance to supplement those junior servicemembers with lower incomes who may have large families or otherwise are eligible. We are working with OSD to implement this new NDAA authority. Any other, large across-the-board changes to the pay should be studied to determine costs and impacts and should be narrowly tailored to identified areas of need. We continue to collaborate with the Department of the Navy and the Office of the Secretary of Defense on economic insecurity mitigation initiatives.

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 our retention effort, allowing the Marine Corps to fill hard to retain positions, such as cyber operators, special operators, and counter intelligence specialists. Selective Reenlistment Bonuses allow us to shape our career force by targeting critical military occupational specialties and supporting lateral movement of marines to these billets.

#### DIVERSITY EQUITY AND INCLUSION

Taking advantage of the wide array of experiences, perspectives, and talent of our all of marines is necessary to maintain our current and future warfighting excellence. We are committed to capitalizing on the knowledge, skills, abilities, performance, and potential of every marine. Diversity in the Marine Corps is improving. Since 2009, diverse enlisted accessions have increased from 34 percent to 48 percent, and diverse officer accessions have increased from 16 percent to 35 percent. Female officers have increased from 8 percent to 15 percent during this same time period. Females represented in previously restricted MOS are also on the rise. Last year, 1,101 females were in previously restricted units; that number is now 1,200. Similarly, 415 women were serving in previously restricted MOS; today that number is 471, including the first woman Reconnaissance Marine. To date, 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 Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Strategic Plan will contribute to our actions over the next 5 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.

Outreach and external engagement are an important facet of our holistic approach to diversity and inclusion. We have steadily increased our Outreach Program budget from \$150,000 in fiscal year 2015 to almost \$1 million in fiscal year 2022. This program provides opportunities for professional development, mentoring, and networking experiences by fully funding approximately 500 marines to attend 19 national/regional conferences hosted by non-federal entity affinity groups events throughout the year.

#### TAKING CARE OF MARINES AND THEIR FAMILIES

As we embark on this new strategic landscape, we will not allow for the real impacts of life and service to our Corps on families to be a blind-spot; our fighting effectiveness is not just built in unit training, it is supported 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. As mentioned throughout TM2030—talent management is not just managing exquisite skills—talent management is also deeply connected to the life a marine builds when not training with their unit. 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.

#### *Behavioral Health*

*Sexual Assault Prevention & Response.* Sexual assault and sexual harassment prevention and response are top priorities for the Marine Corps. The Marine Corps appreciates and remains committed to implementing the Independent Review Commis-

sion's (IRC) recommendations. We have established plans of actions and milestones for the IRC recommendations to align with Departmental guidance. We will continue to collaborate and work with the Department of Navy on execution of our Marine Corps implementation plans. Full compliance will require significant resources (\$560 million over FYDP for 723 new civilian employees and 103 military billets). The Marine Corps' overarching approach to all these plans is to create and maintain a culture that instills respect and protects the well-being and readiness of every marine, their family and our civilian workforce.

There are a number of important updates to our sexual assault prevention efforts. For example, we have changed our training pipeline for entry level training and professional military education in order to promote integrated prevention and ensure skill building across the career. We have also updated our Commander's Course to better prepare senior leadership to prevent sexual assault once they assume command. This includes information focused on actionable recommendations for pre-command leaders and small group discussions facilitated by Marine Corps mentors and SAPR experts. Commanders set the tone of their unit—we know how important it is to ensure they are equipped before they assume command to establish the right command climate—a climate that encourages marines to look out for one another and report destructive behaviors and crimes, and that mandates accountability for perpetrators and enablers. Finally, the Marine Corps has created a SAPR Data Dashboard which has been released to leaders across the enterprise and sets us apart in our use of data to inform prevention. The SAPR Data Dashboard allows SARC's to explore and visualize the data within their areas of responsibility, comparing across time, demographics, subordinate commands, and more. This provides SARC's with data analysis to inform targeted sexual assault prevention initiatives and to collaborate on data-driven integrated prevention.

*Suicide Prevention.* Suicide is an enterprise-wide concern that has lasting harmful effects on marines, families, and the Marine Corps. Because leadership involvement is critical to preventing crisis, suicide prevention is a commander's program in the Marine Corps. Every leader focuses on building connections with each one of their marines to recognize unhealthy stress responses, promoting an environment in which mental wellness is prioritized, and utilizing medical providers, counselors, chaplains, and other health and wellness resources throughout the Marine Corps.

The Marine Corps' Death by Suicide Review Board continues to identify key themes and provide actionable information. For example, we know more than sixty percent of recent death by suicide among marines involved firearms, so we are focused on lethal means safety initiatives. We have also learned that relationship distress is consistently the most common stressor present among those marines who have died by suicide. As a result, primary prevention efforts have increased the focus on healthy relationship development.

The importance of force preservation and resiliency cannot be understated for a ready Marine Corps. The Marine Corps Force Preservation process is the formalized method used by commanders to identify individual marine risk factors and apply holistic risk management measures to improve individual and unit readiness. Every day, this process assists leaders across the Corps to identify those in need. To further improve and modernize force preservation, we have developed an application-based tool that will provide Commanders a single, standardized platform to enable proactive identification and assessment of individual marine risk and resiliency factors. With the implementation of our Command Individual Risk Assessment System (CIRRAS), this data is transferable between commands so that, as marines PCS, gaining commands will have a clear picture of the marines at higher risk, allowing for proactive support from the command.

#### FAMILY SUPPORT

*Parental Leave.* No marine should have to choose between service and having a family. 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. Additionally, 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, we currently have waitlists totaling approximately 1,500 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, and lengthy hiring process. An exacerbating factor is that, due to COVID-19 apprehension, almost 50 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 also offer 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, over almost 1,200 children were enrolled in the fee assistance program at a total cost of over \$4.3 million; the resources provided by Congress are both appreciated and well utilized.

*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. To assist, the Marine Corps hosts job fairs and provides employment-related referral services, resume and cover letter writing training, one-on-one career coaching, entrepreneur business opportunities, and other services. We also utilize the non-competitive military spouse appointment authority to help spouses obtain jobs. Recently, we have created a process that makes it easier for military spouses working in a CDC to transfer to a position at 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.

#### CONCLUSION

Your marines are the centerpiece of the Marine Corps—always have been, always will be. Our highest priority is recruiting, developing, and retaining elite warriors. We have decisively stepped out on a talent management design and modernization effort to increase the lethality of your Marine Corps to fight and win if called upon by the Nation. Accomplishing the objectives of force design will not be possible without the right marines to execute it.

The challenges to accomplishing our 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 or 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 for tomorrow's Marine Corps leaders. At the same time, we also need to ensure the readiness of our marine families. We know that we recruit marines, but we retain their families. We must continue to provide the quality behavioral health, family support, and other family readiness programs that enable marines to remain in the Marine Corps.

Victory in the competition for talent is a Marine Corps with improved performance and lethality in combat, and a force that fulfills our Congressional mandate to be 'most ready when the Nation is least ready,' today and on the battlefields of the future.

I am proud to represent your marines, their families, and our civilian employees and look forward to answering your questions. *Semper fidelis.*

Senator GILLIBRAND. Thank you very much. Now I would like to hear from Ms. Gwendoline R. DeFilippi, Assistant Deputy Chief of Staff of the Air Force for Manpower, Personnel and Services.

#### **STATEMENT OF GWENDOLYN DEFILIPPI, ACTING DEPUTY CHIEF OF STAFF FOR MANPOWER, PERSONNEL AND SERVICES, UNITED STATES AIR FORCE**

Ms. DEFILIPPI. Chairman Gillibrand, Ranking Member Tillis, distinguished Members of this Committee, thank you for the opportunity to appear before you to talk about our airmen and families. Winning a 21st century fight requires adaptable, resilient, innova-



tive airmen, comfortable leading and flourishing as members of a diverse team.

The Air Force will leverage a 21st century tailor of talent management force development and care solution ecosystem to develop airmen who can operate and succeed in a complex environment. Our airmen and families are our greatest competitive advantage. We buy things, we invest in people.

Over the past year, the Department of the Air Force continued its focus on providing the absolute best care for our airmen, guardians, and their families, while taking all steps necessary to create an inclusive environment where everyone has the opportunity to reach his or her full potential. The Department recognizes that despite strong efforts over many years, we have not made significant, measurable progress in preventing or reducing the number of sexual assault cases.

We remain committed to efforts to combat sexual assault in the ranks and are open to piloting research or data informed prevention strategies that can reduce and eventually eliminate sexual assault from within our ranks.

This year, the Department of the Air Force began implementing the Independent Review Commission's recommendations, increasing our full time response advocates, adding additional oversight to support victims, and increasing advocacy and support to sexual harassment victims.

In response to the Department of Defense's concerning trend—suicide trends, the Department of the Air Force established prevention priorities for 2022 that align with the White House strategy for reducing military and veteran suicides and nest within the prevention strategies established by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

While we recognize risk factors for suicide are highly personal and often a result of interconnected issues, our analysis supports those leading indicators identified by experts in the field to include relationship issues, stigma towards seeking mental health care, and access to lethal means.

We have taken targeted measures to address these areas of concern. In order to provide support to airmen who may be hesitant to come forward, the Department of the Air Force launched online Family Suicide Prevention Training, and we have trained over 20,000 family members.

Additionally, in order to address access to lethal means, we are working towards building a culture where safe storage is commonplace, putting time and distance between an individual in distress and access to lethal methods such as firearms or medications. Recognizing a resilient environment for our families is also important. We strengthen efforts to manage our childcare programs more effectively while increasing capacity within the system.

Further, the Department continues to assist airmen, guardians, and families with multiple solutions to support financial readiness and opportunities to promote food security across the force. Thank you for the recent basic needs allowance legislation to better support the well-being of those for whom food insecurity may be an issue. The Air Force is balancing manpower readiness and force modernization amid tight fiscal demands.

Our end strength demands—our military and strength reductions in fiscal year 2023 are commensurate with proposed force structure and divestitures. In order to execute the planned fiscal year 2023 manpower reductions and not face involuntary force management actions, the Air Force likely will end fiscal year 2022 between 1 and 2 percent below the congressionally mandated in strength.

Although the Department continues to experience high retention overall, we are seeing challenges in critical specialty capabilities we need future airmen to have. Therefore, we have focused on deliberate programs to attract and retain military and civilian cyber talent as well as other STEM [scientific, technology, engineering, and mathematics] areas of expertise. We appreciate the talent management flexibilities you have provided to assist us in these efforts.

To enhance our talent pool, our United States Air Force Academy has taken measures to ensure all cadets take courses with focus on cyber. In addition, through the civilian premier college intern program, we recruit approximately 500 diverse students annually who have—and have met our goal that 75 percent hold STEM degrees.

We understand it is equally important to execute retention programs for these critical skills, so we continue to utilize different career and developmental flexibilities as well as targeted monetary incentives in an effort to retain this talent. The Air Force achieved its fiscal year 2021 recruiting goals, and we hope to do so again in fiscal year 2022. But we may miss a goal based on increased competition for talent, as well as continued decline in propensity and eligibility of young Americans.

In conclusion, success against a peer threat demands we maintain asymmetric advantage in the quality, education, and training of our airmen, and we are investing accordingly. We have made progress, but the Air Force still has work to do before we have an environment that allows all airmen and their families to reach their full potential.

We continue to pursue every practical solution that moves us closer to making this environment a reality, and we look forward to continuing to partner with Congress in our endeavors to do so.

I thank you for your continued support of your Department of the Air Force and your airmen, both military and civilian, and the families who support them. Thank you, and I look forward to your questions.

[The prepared statement of Ms. Gwendolyn R. DeFilippi follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT BY MS. GWENDOLYN R. DEFILIPPI

#### 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 Air and Space professionals remain steadfast in providing Global Vigilance, Reach, and Power to protect and defend our Nation.

The Nation's security challenges as outlined in the National Defense Strategy are growing at a rapid pace and it is clear our Air Force must accelerate the changes needed to successfully meet those challenges or face losing. Winning a 21st century fight will require adaptable, resilient, innovative airmen comfortable leading and flourishing as members of a team capable of easily delivering results in a dynamic operating environment. We as an Air Force are fully focused on this imperative and recognize our airmen and their families form the essential foundation for our ability to change and meet those future challenges.

Current world events remind us that the only constant is change, and it is imperative our Air and Space Forces and their families remain ready and resilient at all times. Pandemic recovery continues to force us to address new challenges with supply chains, rising inflation and the “Great Resignation” phenomena creating critical staffing shortages in industries such as mental health and child care. As we continue mitigation of these concerns, we are working hard to ensure every airman has every opportunity to reach their full potential.

Through all the challenges, the Air Force continues to accomplish our assigned missions and our airmen continue to shine. We are developing the Air Force we need to defend our Nation and managing the talent we have to help unleash the full power of the world’s greatest Air Force.

It should be noted the United States Air Force (USAF) continues to provide much of the member and family support efforts for the overall Department. In discussing all of our support and family related programs, we are providing support to both airmen and guardians. This approach allows the Space Force to remain a lean, operationally-focused service.

#### HELPING AIRMEN REACH THEIR FULL POTENTIAL

Our airmen, guardians and families are our greatest competitive advantage. We buy things, we invest in people. Over the past year, the Department of the Air Force (DAF) continued its focus on providing the absolute best care for our airmen and their families, while taking all steps necessary to create an inclusive environment where every airman has the opportunity to reach their full potential.

#### *Combatting Sexual Assault & Sexual Harassment*

Sexual assault and sexual harassment are crimes and their impact undermine our force lethality, readiness, and mission success. It is part of a continuum of harm that too often begins with sexual harassment, which must also be priority if we are to maintain the ready, diverse, and lethal force necessary to defend our Nation. The DAF recognizes that despite strong efforts over many years, we have not made significant, measurable progress in preventing or reducing the prevalence of sexual assault or sexual harassment. We have more work to do. We remain focused and persistent in our efforts to combat this continuum of harm in the ranks using effective, research-informed prevention strategies and ensuring comprehensive support and response for sexual assault and sexual harassment victims.

Sexual assault reporting across the DAF has steadily increased since 2010. Between 2019 and 2020, our sexual assault reports from servicemembers rose slightly from 1388 to 1390 for incidents occurring during military service.

The 90-Day Independent Review Commission (IRC) directed fundamental changes to prevention of and response to sexual assault and sexual harassment. The DAF has begun implementing the IRC’s recommendations in alignment with Department of Defense (DOD) guidance. We are increasing our full-time advocates to strengthen the response workforce that must be place to ensure critical support and care of victims; we are developing a plan to ensure an independent reporting structure for our Sexual Assault and Response Coordinator (SARC)s outside of the chain of command to provide independent oversight and empowerment to support victims while maintaining direct access to Commanders; and we are enabling sexual harassment victims to access victim advocacy support from Sexual Assault Prevention and Response (SAPR) advocates. Additionally, we are implementing the Safe-to-Report policy throughout the DAF. Directed by Congress and originally developed by the United States Air Force Academy (USAF), this policy removes barriers to reporting by eliminating punishment for minor collateral misconduct, like underage drinking or fraternization. We are also an active participant in the DOD’s Catch a Serial Offender program that identifies serial offenders of sexual assault via anonymous reporting of sexual assault. As of February 2022, the DAF was able to identify 18 matches through this program; two reports converted to unrestricted reports.

Further, the DAF is addressing environmental factors of climate and culture, such as sexist attitudes and beliefs that are associated with increased risk of sexual harassment and sexual assaults. The Sexual Communication and Consent and Wingman Intervention Trainings address attitudes and beliefs that promote a healthy culture and climate. In July 2020, the Secretary of the Air Force requested the formation of an

Interpersonal Violence Task Force to examine the Department of the Air Force’s ability to keep airmen and guardians safe once they had experienced interpersonal violence. This request was, in part, triggered by tragedies involving U.S. servicemembers, including the murders of Airman First Class Natasha Aposhian at Grand Forks Air Force Base and Specialist Vanessa Guillen at Fort Hood. The Interpersonal Violence (IPV) Task Force Final Report, published in November 2021,

laying out recommendations addressing environmental factors of climate and culture, such as sexist attitudes and beliefs that are associated with increased risk of sexual harassment and sexual assaults. We are conducting a study to provide additional insight from the Interpersonal Violence Taskforce data to inform future prevention activities. Our goal is to create trust in both our response and support services, flexibility for victims to access the care and support they want and need through a warm hand-off approach that strengthens coordination across our Family Advocacy and SAPR programs, as well as in our accountability programs in order to eliminate any gap between reporting and prevalence, while trying to reduce both to zero overall. Until that time, we have work to do.

The Task Force designed and administered an anonymous, online survey to Department of the Air Force personnel—Regular Air Force and Space Force, Guard, Reserves, and civilians—over a six-week period during fall 2020. Survey items addressed whether respondents experienced any of 81 behaviors across what is commonly known as the “continuum of harm” in the 2 years preceding the survey. The Task Force also conducted focus groups and collected qualitative feedback via online questionnaires from DAF personnel who were interested in offering more detailed feedback regarding their experiences with interpersonal violence. According to the report, analysis showed that many victims do not report the behaviors, or when they do, they do not believe anything will be done. The report also highlights most victims were not satisfied with support service agencies. The Task Force made three major recommendations based on its findings, which the DAF is currently working on implementing and ensuring our MAJCOMs are a well. In response to the findings in the report, the DAF Special Victims’ Counsel Program instituted a pilot program to expand legal services and representation available to airmen and guardians who have experienced interpersonal violence. Additionally, the DAF is taking steps to institutionalize a “warm hand off,” or “No Wrong Door” policy, to address sexual assault, domestic violence, harassment and stalking. This concept ensures anyone seeking help receives a warm hand off between helping agencies as the right support and guidance within our organization is determined. Supportive service agencies will also ensure victims and their families have support from initial reporting through resolution and post-care. The Secretary of Defense’s Independent Review Commission (IRC) on Sexual Assault in the Military, which stood up after the DAF Interpersonal Violence Task Force, incorporated many of the findings and recommendations of the Task Force into its final report. Our goal is to create trust in both our response and support services, flexibility for victims to access the care and support they want and need through a warm hand-off approach that strengthens coordination across our Family Advocacy and SAPR programs, as well as in our accountability programs in order to eliminate any gap between reporting and prevalence, while trying to reduce both to zero overall.

Our Air Force Academy sexual assault reporting was consistent from academic year (AY) 2016–2017 to 2017–2018 with 23 reports each year involving actively-enrolled cadets as either the victim or the subject, but rose to 40 reports in academic year 2018–2019, 41 reports academic year 2019–2020, and 55 reports academic year 2020–2021. We have yet to attribute any causality to this increase, but the initiation of the “Teal Ropes” Cadet program and a “Safe To Report” policy change are based on evidence-informed best and promising practices to reduce barriers to reporting. In academic year 2021–2022, the “Safe To Report” policy was cited by 22 cadets as an influence on their decision to report. We continue efforts to monitor and reduce incidents at the USAFA and across the force.

Our overall DAF strategy is focused on prevention, response, and accountability. Our prevention framework includes using assessment tools to identify risk and protective factors for our population, addressing negative attitudes and beliefs that can lead to an environment that tolerates unethical behavior, designing actions to mitigate key sexual assault risk factors while promoting protective factors, and designing ways to equip leaders at all levels to foster protective factors and reduce risk factors, growing Wingmen intervention skills, and promoting positive unit culture to eradicate sexual assault.

Our prevention efforts feature several ongoing training initiatives. The Sexual Communication and Consent (SCC) Program, an innovative, evidence-informed sexual assault prevention training developed specifically for delivery during Basic Military Training (BMT), includes both universal and tailored content. Over 8,000 trainees went through the SCC Program Pilot between September 2019 and April 2020. After completion, the trainees increased knowledge of sexual assault by 4.4 percent, knowledge of consent by 1.8 percent, and self-efficacy to resist sexual assault by 6.8 percent. We also saw desired decreases: date rape myth attitudes decreased by -4.2 percent, dating risk behaviors by -3.9 percent, and social risk behaviors by -4.5 percent.

The SCC curriculum was revised based on the 2019–2020 pilot, and over 1,200 BMT trainees completed the revised, tablet-based training. After the training, the trainees showed a 9.3 percent increase in knowledge of sexual assault, a 4.2 percent increase in consent knowledge and an 8.5 percent increase in self-efficacy to resist sexual assault. Additionally risky dating behaviors decreased 10 percent. The study also found the training appeared to reach sexual assault survivors and potential victims with content that might reduce their future risk for victimization while improving knowledge and attitudes that could prevent harmful behaviors among potential perpetrators. The USAFA is building on these BMT initiatives and initiated a three-year pilot study that just began with the class of 2025.

The DAF also requires annual, Air Force-wide training consisting of three components: Bystander Intervention Training, Wingman Intervention Training, and Total Force Sexual Assault and Prevention Training. Bystander Intervention Training provides foundational concepts of safe and desired bystander behavior to all airmen and guardians across the total force. Wingman Intervention Training in Technical School and at the First Term Airman Center targets the most at-risk age group population for sexual assault. The Total Force Sexual Assault Prevention and Response Training is updated annually to ensure continual engagement on this critical issue.

The On Site Installation Evaluation (OSIE) began as a part of Secretary Austin's Immediate Actions to Address Sexual Assault and Harassment. The DAF supported the efforts to review policy compliance and the OSIE. The OSIE concluded with recommendations to revise and develop policies to support a dedicated primary prevention workforce, institutionalize OSIEs, issue prevention policy, ensure leaders at OSIE sites enhance authentic engagement and responsiveness to the military community's needs, reinforce healthy climates, define the local prevention system, enhance military community engagement and help-seeking, and address compliance deficiencies. The DAF continues to support OSD in efforts to address the recommendations. We have a dedicated prevention workforce and dedicated prevention policy. We are enhancing our prevention workforce to meet new and emerging requirements. The workforce is focused on data informed prevention activities aimed at reducing interpersonal and self-directed violence. DAF plans to incorporate recommendations in DAFI 90–5001 and implement yearly compliance reporting.

As part of the DAF's ongoing prevention efforts and IRC recommendations, we established 175 dedicated, installation-level, prevention experts focused on support and activities to specifically address the prevention of all forms of interpersonal and self-directed violence, address local risk factors, and enhance protective factors of our airmen and guardians. Beginning in 2022, and also part of the IRC recommendations, the DAF is expanding the prevention workforce by adding 227 full-time dedicated prevention professionals; they will be onboard by the end 2023. We anticipate recruiting for 103 positions beginning in the summer of 2022 and 124 positions in the summer of 2023.

Department of the Air Force response programs include Sexual Assault Response Coordinators, Special Victim Advocates, restricted and unrestricted reporting processes, and medical care for victims.

The DAF is implementing the fiscal year 2022 NDAA requirements to establish an independent Office of Special Trial Counsel (OSTC) to oversee the investigation of and prosecution of sexual assault and other victim-based offenses. We are close to a proposed organizational structure, to include identification of personnel and resourcing requirements for the OSTC construct. We are working aggressively and on track to fulfill all first-year Congressional reporting requirements during the OSTC program stand up. In addition to the implementation of the OSTC, the DAF is partnering with OSD to maximize overlap of IRC implementation and other NDAA provisions involving military justice. We are using the authorities granted in the NDAA and contemplated by the IRC to address sexual harassment by actively utilizing the new Article 134, UCMJ, offense in investigations and prosecutions of sexual harassment and educating the force on its punitive nature.

Moreover, we are working toward developing a dedicated sexual harassment investigation function that will enable effective, independent investigations in accordance with the NDAA and IRC recommendations. Finally, we've updated our military leave program to provide non-chargeable time off to victims of sexual assault to assist with their recovery. Moreover, we continue to train and educate commanders as well as update policies to enhance victim notification, consultation and input during the military justice process.

#### *Suicide Prevention*

In 2020, the DOD Active Component suicide rate was 28.7 per 100K; DAF Active Component suicide rate was 24.3 per 100K. After controlling for differences in age and sex, the Active Component and National Guard (27 per 100,000) suicide rates

are comparable to US population rates, while the Reserve rate (21.7) is lower. The largest demographic of 2020 DAF suicides are single men, between the ages of 23–30, and in the rank of E1–E4, who use die by suicide using a firearm. Data through quarter four of 2021 shows the DAF Active Component suicide counts have reduced and are now consistent with pre-2019 levels, as published by the Defense Suicide Prevention Office. We anticipate the 2021 DOD Annual Suicide Report release in Sep of 2022 and will be able to complete a more thorough analysis of 2021 suicide trends upon receipt of the report.

Death by firearm is the most common means of DAF suicide (over 70 percent since 2015, 61 percent for calendar year 2020) for personnel living in the Continental United States (CONUS) and over 90 percent of DAF suicide deaths occur in the U.S., making firearms by far the most prevalent method for suicide in the DAF (this pattern is similar to the national population as well). The overwhelming majority of firearms used in DAF CONUS suicides are personally owned. Death by asphyxiation is the most common means of DAF suicide when personnel are located outside of the Continental United States (OCONUS). The stark difference between firearm and asphyxiation methods of suicide-deaths based upon location are likely due to the fact that personally-owned firearms are generally not permitted for OCONUS DAF personnel (varies by location and type of firearm).

Over 60 percent of the airmen who died by suicide in the DAF had access to some form of lethal means in their household. Data from 2020 reveals that less than 15 percent of these members had their lethal means safely stored in a manner consistent with the “Go SLO” (Safes, Locks, or Outside the home) recommendations consistent with the DAF lethal means safety effort – Time-Based Prevention. Clearly more work is needed in this area, which is why lethal means safety is a DAF suicide prevention priority. Between 2020 and 2021, we distributed over 202,000 gun locks along with educational and training materials on safe storage options. In March 2022, the Department of Air Force launched a lethal means safety comprehensive implementation and evaluation plan. The Time-Based Prevention initiative is intended to eliminate the hazard of firearms and other lethal means being readily available when an airman or guardian is in distress. Continuing the “Go SLO” campaign will help build a culture where safe storage is commonplace, reducing immediacy of access to firearms for those in distress and preventing firearm accidents for Air and Space families.

Male airmen have a 3.3 times greater risk of dying by suicide compared to female airmen and guardians. In addition, younger airmen and guardians are more likely to die by suicide than older personnel. Airmen and guardians 30 years or younger are at higher risk of dying by suicide than those over 30. In the U.S. population, the rate of suicide deaths among non-Hispanic Whites is more than twice the suicide rate of Blacks, Asians, or Hispanic Whites. Due to low counts, ethnicity rates cannot be calculated for DAF in any detail, however general trends suggest that Hispanic/Latino/a/x are less likely to die by suicide than those who identify as not-Hispanic/Latino/a/x or those who decline to respond. There is no difference in suicide rates between white and black airmen. Asians and All Other Races/Mixed Race are at increased odds of dying by suicide compared with other racial categories. While it may appear that race and ethnicity are significant risk factors for suicide-death in the DAF, it is important to recognize that there are insufficient numbers at this time to make predictions of risk based on race or ethnic category. This should remain an emphasis of investigation as more data becomes available.

Once gender and age are taken into account, suicide risk does not significantly differ by Air Force Specialty Code (AFSC). The AFSCs with the highest number of suicide deaths generally are the largest AFSCs and AFSCs that are disproportionately filled with young men. Between 2015 and 2020, the Aerospace Maintenance and Security Forces populations were 64 percent males 30 and under, whereas the rest of the DAF career fields were only 44 percent men of this age. This population variance is reflected in slightly higher suicide deaths in those career fields.

Relationship issues are the leading risk factor for suicide deaths; consistently over 40 percent of deaths by suicide were of individuals who experienced relationship issues. Additionally, between 20–30 percent of decedents experienced problems in more than one of the following areas: relationships, legal trouble, financial issues, administrative problems, and workplace issues. There is still a gap between identifying someone at risk and taking effective action to intervene or refer for help.

In the spring of 2020, the DAF provided tools and lessons to help maintain social connections during the pandemic. These tools included our first-ever suicide prevention training for family members. This training provides greater awareness about resources and programs available and equips family members to identify warning signs and act as another sensor in our detection and prevention methods. Since implementation in late calendar year 2020, more than 20,000 family members have

connected to the site and completed the training. Over 6.5k who connected to the site stayed to earn a certificate of training completion. Eighty-five percent of those who visited the site indicated being more likely to intervene with someone in distress.

Airmen and guardians (AD, Reserve, and Guard) under investigation for Uniformed Code of Military Justice violations are at increased risk for suicide death. Between 2017 and 2021, 11 percent of airmen and guardians who died by suicide were accused of, or had been found to have perpetrated interpersonal violence within a year of their death. For these reasons, the Air Force is continuing its application of the Limited Privilege Suicide Prevention Program, ensuring that airmen under investigation have confidentiality with mental health providers such that they don't see their prosecution as a barrier to accessing the care they need, particularly during the height of a stressful investigation.

Emotional abuse was the leading type of interpersonal violence experienced by airmen and guardians across the Total Force who attempted or died by suicide. Between 2017 and 2021, 15 percent of those who attempted suicide experienced one or more forms of interpersonal violence within a year of their attempt. Females are more likely to attempt suicide due to higher reports/incidences of interpersonal violence within their gender.

Most airmen who attempt or die by suicide have no recent deployment history. In examining suicide deaths between 2016 and 16 September 2021, 2 percent of decedents were currently deployed and 4 percent of decedents had deployed less than 3 months prior to their death. Among attempts in this same timeframe, 3 percent of airmen and guardians were currently deployed and 3 percent of airmen and guardians had deployed less than three months prior to their attempt. The average yearly total force airmen and guardian deployment rate is 18 percent.

Between 2016 and 2021, 31 percent of DAF airmen that attempted suicide had a documented Invisible Wound (IW); categorized as Posttraumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI), and/or Major Depression. Of those who had a documented IW, 85 percent received medical or mental health care (in-patient or out-patient) in the 90 days before their attempt (66 percent received medical and mental health care, 10 percent received only medical care, and 9 percent received only mental health care). Eighteen percent of DAF airmen and guardians that died by suicide between 2016 and 2021 had a documented IW. Seventy-three percent of suicide deaths that had a documented IW received medical or mental health care (in-patient or out-patient) in the 90 days before their death. Forty-eight percent received both medical and mental health care, 14 percent received only medical care, and 11 percent received only mental health care.

To combat suicide trends, the DAF established prevention priorities for 2022 that align with the White House Strategy for reducing Military and Veteran Suicides. These priorities build upon prevention strategies tied to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention: Building Connections, Detecting Risk, Promoting Protective Environments, and Equipping our airmen and families to mitigate risk and build resilience.

Our first priority is focusing on time-based prevention; increasing safe storage by encouraging "going SLO" and building time and space between personnel in distress and access to lethal means, helping to prevent accidents. Our second priority is engaging, empowering and equipping families. We will continue our efforts to engage and equip spouses and family members in resilience and prevention activities. Our third prevention priority is reducing stigma and barriers to accessing care. As an extension of our communications and marketing messaging about resilience and prevention tools and resources, this renewed emphasis will be focused on positive outcomes that result from accessing the care already available.

Our fourth priority is to address upstream risk and protective factors. Nationally-recognized experts, with published seminal research, have partnered with our team to create group-strength and peer-to-peer networking content that has proven impact. Incorporating these facets into our resiliency training will have a far-upstream effect on both resilience and well-being of our force, which will then impact suicide prevention, affecting our airmen and guardians long before distress manifests into negative behaviors.

Last, we want to emphasize data sharing, evaluation and research. Accelerating the identification and dissemination of those programs that are truly effective, combined with sharing data on these efforts with the field, will amplify our results. In addition, we will use rigorous evaluation of our existing programs to assess implementation and effectiveness of all major resilience and prevention efforts in order to drive program improvements. We'll establish priorities using program self-assessment results, suicide analysis board results, and latest research within a continuous process improvement framework.

The DAF's True North program continues to support mission readiness by providing commanders resources and guidance to empower assigned personnel to seek assistance from embedded Mental Health providers and Religious Support Teams. Access to mental and religious support teams within a unit builds trust and confidence in help-seeking actions for unit members. Under the True North initiative, mental and spiritual support teams are permanently embedded in the highest need units at 16 bases, all Air Support Operations, Rescue, and HQ OSI units. These True North support teams work with unit leadership to positively influence airman and family well-being, increase resilience, and decrease negative outcomes such as suicide, sexual assault, domestic violence, workplace violence and child maltreatment while improving mission readiness and optimizing human performance.

On March 22, 2022, the Secretary of Defense released a memo establishing the Suicide Prevention and Response Independent Review Committee (SPRIRC) to identify actionable improvements. Secretary Austin approved 9 installations as the initial designated locations for review. DAF installations include Nellis AFB, Nevada; Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson, Alaska; and Eielson AFB, Alaska. The SPRIRC will visit these installations and conduct focus groups, individual interviews, and a confidential survey of the servicemembers. The Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness will issue further guidance including SPRIRC members, charter, and timeline of events. The SPRIRC work will begin by mid-May and installation visits will begin by August 2022. The DAF will assist in every way possible at our three locations to ensure full compliance with the SPRIRC and to communicate all we do to help airmen and guardians with their mental health and well-being.

#### *Resiliency*

The DAF 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 including, but not limited to, the Chaplain Corps, Mental Health, Airman & Family Readiness Centers, Employee Assistance Program, Deployment Transition Center, Sexual Assault Response Coordinators and Morale, Welfare and Recreation Programs. 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.

Although the DAF has a large number of agencies providing resiliency services, these offerings are often not connected, making it more difficult for members and their families to get the continuum of care needed quickly. Based on recommendations from the IRC, we have brought together the 32 agencies to develop a "Warm Handoff" approach strategy. The "Warm Handoff" approach will ensure individuals seeking assistance are referred to the appropriate services through a warm hand-off. In support of the "Warm Handoff" approach, we are building training and resources for leaders at all levels, command teams, and service providers (medical and non-medical) to standardize the process for conducting a warm hand-off (i.e., person-to-person referral).

We improved the community action planning process to help our installation/MAJCOM community action personnel provide the resilience programs and services that airmen/guardians and their families need. HAF worked with RAND to streamline the Getting to Outcomes (GTO) process and tools for community action planning, along with a new guide, training videos, and resources to assist the field use the GTO process more effectively and efficiently.

The DAF is also evolving the Resiliency Skills Training and the Master Resiliency Training programs to enhance resiliency and psychological well-being across the enterprise. We are collaborating with Air University to evolve these programs to in two areas—impact and implementation. These programs will provide our resiliency workforce with skills need to enhance protective factors and skills for dealing with adversity. In addition, the programs will prepare the resiliency workforce to provide airmen, guardians and their families with additional skills in forming and enhancing peer-to-peer relationships.

Additionally, 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 DAF Integrated Resilience approach is helping to bring about a renewed understanding and approach towards an integrated care and support system of care approach across the DAF that addresses well-being, quality of life issues, diversity and inclusion actions, resilience activities, personal and professional development, and clinical and non-clinical intervention and response. Through the DAF Community Action Team and Senior Leader engagements, four key themes of connections matter; there is no wrong door; placement and access builds trust; and accountability, innovation, flexi-



bility, and continuous evaluation are being addressed. Furthermore, the DAF continues to aggressively pursue effective and innovative solutions to move us closer to making an environment where airmen, guardians, and family members can reach their full potential a reality. The Department is aware of the link between sexual assault and sexual harassment retention risk and therefore investing in implementation of IRC recommendations will also serve to support climates that are safe, inclusive and respectful and will ultimately help with retention across the force.

#### FAMILY CARE

While we recruit to the individual airmen, we retain families. The DAF is committed to designing solutions that take care of our military families including improvements to child and youth program capacity, military spouse support, and family stability.

##### *Exceptional Family Member Program*

The DAF remains committed to continued improvement of our Exceptional Family Member Program (EFMP), positively impacting 55,000 family members and 36,000 total force members enrolled in the program. We are approximately 60 percent complete in our multi-year, transformational journey, to modernize the program. Key accomplishments include centralization of resources; staffing and manning studies; and automation initiatives.

The DAF established the EFMP Central Cell at the Air Force Personnel Center in June 2020. The EFMP Central Cell integrates multi-disciplinary support subject matter experts in medical, assignments, special education, and legal matters. The Cell has on its team a special education attorney as well as a special education specialist provided to assist our families and school liaisons. Additionally, we added a TRICARE Liaison, Respite Care Coordinator and additional medical and assignment personnel to better facilitate centralized travel screening.

Additionally, in August 2021, we implemented an automated Case Management system through which families apply for family member travel screening. The online application replaces several complex multi-page forms with intuitive, easy-to-navigate software focused on the user experience. Families are no longer required to submit a new application with each Permanent Change of Station, and servicemembers can track their case via the platform dashboard and follow up as needed. Additionally, the online application through DAF Family Vector is accessible via username and password versus Common Access Card, allowing family members to access and complete this digital application together with the servicemember.

The centralized travel screening process facilitates collaborative case reviews, consistent decisions, and an unbiased, comprehensive view of care availability. Our medical provider team review each case utilizing the families' electronic medical records, and insurance claim information from the central cell, resulting in minimal or no appointments as civilian medical records are no longer required. The Central Cell contacts families if additional medical documentation is required. Finally, a Healthcare Benefits Analyst reviews all potential travel disapproval determinations to assess whether alternative care solutions are available. If such care is available and the member is moving between regions, the Cell coordinates care between TRICARE regions. If disapproved, families have an appeals process; Assignment Navigators assist families' locally when medical and/or educational care is unavailable at the gaining base.

The DAF also continues to improve EFMP families' access to support for their special needs family members at installations. Presently, 105 Airman & Family Readiness Center Exceptional Family Member Program Family Support Coordinators are spread across 82 installations, working to enhance the quality of life of special needs families.

Further, DAF EFMP Medical Offices at installation Medical Treatment Facilities provide 83 primary-duty Special Needs Coordinators and 78 primary-duty Special Needs Technicians to assist families locally with EFMP enrollment, PCS, and disenrollment concerns.

The DAF remains engaged with the DOD Office of Special Needs on implementing respite care services and looks forward to full implementation of standardization efforts by the end of fiscal year 2024.

##### *Child and Youth Programs*

Available, affordable, quality child care programs support families and enable our members to focus on the mission. In 2021, the DAF provided child care for over 43,816 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. In fiscal year 2021, 5,581 children were served through the Military Child Care in Your Neighborhood program with \$17.6 million in fee assistance.

The pandemic negatively impacted unmet demand and the wait time for on base child care due to local health conditions, availability of staff, quarantine requirements, and social distancing guidelines. The pandemic challenges illustrated that we must find innovative ways to expand capacity and improve access to child care for airmen and guardians in addition to advocating for resources to fund child care facility requirements. As of the beginning of April 2022, 5,042 children 5 years of age and under had an unmet on-base child care need with more than half of these children located at ten of 74 installations. The average wait time to satisfy the demand was 128 days.

The Air Force is making every effort to reduce the unmet demand and provide childcare to those who need it. However, it is important to note that unmet demand is defined as requests for on-base child care, either an on-base Child Development Center or an on-base Family Child Care home. Many of the 5,042 have alternative child care available and in use, to include those matched through DAF subsidized care via the Military Child Care in Your Neighborhood (MCCYN) fee assistance program. Many families prefer to have child care on-base and sign up for it by identifying a date care is needed. While that request shows up as unmet demand, it is not always accurate nor does it imply there are 5,042 children who do not have any child care. Based on data collection being accomplished during sign-up and requests, there are 327 children being serviced temporarily via a military childcare facility and 338 serviced temporarily through a community-based child care provider via MCCYN. This leaves 4,377 children without an alternative Air Force-facilitated child care solution while on the wait list. This is the capacity shortfall number we particularly focus on in our various efforts. It includes 1,625 children cared for at home with a parent; 991 in the care of family, friends, or a nanny; and 843 in a family-identified community based childcare program. Nine hundred and eighteen of the 5,042 indicated they cannot find a childcare alternative or did not indicate how their child would be cared for while on the wait list.

The DAF is addressing the availability and delivery of Child and Youth Programs with targeted efforts to maximize child care options, expand child care capacity, and leverage customer feedback in determining emerging and ongoing needs. We have a robust communication strategy with online resources that educates supervisors and family members about available care solution options and how to access them. To increase child care 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 child care, and other specialized care for our Air and Space families. The DAF Child and Youth Programs Business Management System is currently being rolled out across the enterprise in 2022. This management tool will improve program operations and facilitate communication between the program and parents. This cloud-based data management system enables the Department to access real-time data to effectively utilize critical child care space requirements, improved wait list monitoring and establish improved enterprise decision support on resourcing for child and youth programs.

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 DAF location to another, eliminating the requirement to apply for employment after a relocation. In addition, in response to staffing challenges, we are offering a robust Recruitment, Retention, and Special Employee Recognition Program for non-appropriated Child and Youth Program staff members at all installations.

Five of our top DAF child development center military construction projects – Sheppard Air Force Base, Texas; Joint Base San Antonio-Lackland, Texas; Joint Base San Antonio-Fort Sam Houston, Texas; Wright Patterson Air Force Base, Ohio; and Royal Air Force Lakenheath, United Kingdom were authorized and approved in fiscal year 2022 and should be awarded in the coming months. The DAF continues to dedicate appropriations for child development center planning and design to military construction projects that address facility shortfalls. The Department has issued planning and design funds for child development centers at Joint Base San Antonio-Randolph, Wright Patterson Air Force Base, Hanscom Air Force Base, Scott Air Force Base, Luke Air Force Base, Barksdale Air Force Base and Mountain

Home Air Force Base; the child development center projects at Joint Base San Antonio-Randolph and Wright Patterson Air Force Base will be ready for award in fiscal year 2023 should funds become available. In addition, seven minor construction expansion projects to increase capacity through addition of classrooms or alteration of existing space are currently in planning with execution projected for fiscal years 2022 and 2023. The seven addition/alteration projects are for child development centers at Joint Base San Antonio-Lackland, Joint Base Charleston, Minot Air Force Base, Whiteman Air Force Base, Laughlin Air Force Base, Vandenberg Space Force Base, and Peterson Space Force Base.

#### *Spouse Employment*

Spouse employment is a critical element impacting family resilience, financial readiness, quality of life, retention, and mission success. Permanent Change of Station moves may negatively impact a military spouse's ability to achieve his or her own career goals and aspirations, often leading to reduced employment opportunities or underemployment. The DOD and DAF spouse employment programs provide a robust system of support to help military spouses find meaningful employment and connect with available resources. The DAF continues to engage with states on improving spouse employment opportunities and advocating for improved professional license portability or pursuing interstate compacts. In 2020, the DAF released results of the "Supporting our Military Families" initiative which assesses each state's efforts to support military spouse licensure portability and links military quality of life factors to the strategic basing process. This initiative shifts the strategy from expediting individual state licensing through legislation to encouraging a "universal approach" to licensing and interstate compacts. Results show positive trends, driving many states to look for ways to remove barriers and make portability easier for military spouses. Additionally, the DAF reimburses up to \$1000 for re-licensing/re-certification costs resulting from a Permanent Change of Station move for spouses of military members.

The DAF utilizes several approaches to recruit and appoint military spouses. The non-competitive military spouse appointment authority has provided the Air Force with the ability to hire approximately 2590 military spouses from fiscal year 2019 to March 2022. This authority is one of many authorities by which a military spouse could be employed with. Additionally, the DOD Military Spouse Preference program provides federal employment hiring preference for spouses relocating due to a military member's Permanent Change of Station move. Spouses exercise their preference by applying for job vacancy announcements of their choosing. Spouses who are best qualified may be appointed to a federal position over non-military spouse candidates. Employment may be permanent, temporary or term limited. Additionally, the DOD has authorized a pilot program at some foreign overseas locations to permit spouses to exercise their authority up to 30 days in advance of their arrival in order to further increase their opportunity to obtain employment. The DAF launched the 18-month pilot in February 2021.

The DAF is fully engaged in ensuring our members and their families have awareness and access to care solutions through a Care Solutions Communication Plan. The plan's objectives are to maximize awareness and effectiveness of the support available. We remain engaged at all levels to communicate and deliver Care Solutions that help airmen, guardians and their families reach maximum performance potential.

#### *Compensation and Food Insecurity*

It is important to note that in the context of the DOD, the term food insecurity is not synonymous with hunger; rather, the term is defined more broadly to also include access to healthy food options.

Through unit First Sergeants, the DAF was able to confirm that food insecurity may be a challenge for small portion of our junior ranks, younger families and single income families. We use a number of different available resources to ensure the well-being of airmen, guardians and families who need assistance.

First Sergeants and Airmen & Family Readiness Centers assist with referrals to programs such as: USDA's Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), the Federal Subsistence Supplemental Allowance program (for members overseas where SNAP benefits are unavailable), and the AF Aid Society (who has expanded the availability of food security related grants and loans). We also offer financial readiness training, free access to personal financial counseling and spouse employment support.

Additionally, the DAF 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 members' income rises above established threshold.

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

A recent study conducted by OSD found that military compensation was 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 DAF acknowledges that compensation is a key factor in recruiting an All-Volunteer Force as well as a way to retain top talent so we are look forward to deeper dialogue on this issue to ensure we have all the tools necessary to take care of the needs of our airman and their families.

#### THE FORCE WE NEED

As the world around us continues to inject uncertainty and rapid change, the Air Force is focused on maintaining readiness today while building the Air Force we need for tomorrow's high-end fight. A fresh look at the foundational competencies and skills we will need to deter and defeat our pacing threats show us that we are on track. We are appreciative for your support and realize that continued Congressional support is paramount as we seek to balance tight fiscal demands with an increasing appetite for digitization and force modernization. Our end strength targets reflect this balancing act between readiness and modernization and resourcing future capabilities to compete and win in the high-end fight, both today and tomorrow.

#### *End Strength*

The United States Air Force end strength is tied to force structure and our ability to rapidly transition to a wartime posture against a peer competitor. It is necessary to divest or end programs not fully aligned with the National Defense Strategy in order to fund accelerated change in critical operational capabilities and functions required to protect the United States' ability to deter conflict and project power against pacing challenges. Our military end strength reductions in fiscal year 2023 are commensurate with proposed force structure and divestitures. Smaller end strength in fiscal year 2023 features 6,020 Total Air Force military manpower reductions from fiscal year 2022 to divest, terminate, or restructure programs with limited utility. Reductions include the legacy missions of Airborne Warning and Control System, Tactical Air Control Parties, Combat Rescue Helicopter (HH-60), F-22, KC-10, F-15 C/D, and Joint Surveillance and Target Attack Radar System along with continued divestiture of military medical manpower. Additionally, the fiscal year 2023 President's Budget includes reduction in the number of unencumbered Individual Mobilization Augmentees for the Air Force Reserve and a small increase for the Air National Guard to support the F-35 mission.

Military medical manpower reductions are a continuation of the Air Force Defense Health Program (DHP) reductions in overall medical wartime requirements. They started in the fiscal year 2020 PB as part of the DOD reduction. Based on demands for pandemic support and congressional concerns over the level of military medical manpower associated with health care delivery, the requested initial decrease of 947 AF medical end strength was delayed from fiscal year 2020 to fiscal year 2023. Further delays could impact operational Air Force missions.

In order to execute the planned fiscal year 2023 manpower reductions and not face involuntary force management actions, the Air Force likely will end fiscal year 2022 1-2 percent below the congressionally mandated end strength.

We thank you for your continued favorable Congressional support of the fiscal year 2023 President's Budget request to ensure the USAF can access the talent we need to compete in a world defined by ambiguity, rapid change, and great power competition.

#### *Recruiting Goals*

The Air Force achieved its fiscal year 2021 Recruiting Goals of 26,656 regular component Enlisted (100 percent of goal) and regular Officers of 4,318 (100 percent of goal). We also met our Air National Guard combined Officer and Enlisted goal by recruiting 9,428 Guard members (109 percent of goal), and our Reserve combined Officer and Enlisted goal of 8,856 (104 percent percent of goal). Although the Air Force is challenged in maintaining a robust Delayed Entry Program membership, we are capable of reaching our fiscal year 2022 recruiting goals of 26,201 regular Enlisted and 4,111 regular Officers. We continue to see upward progress in our Ac-

tive Duty processing and Delayed Entry Program but lag behind the number of new applicants we need to feel comfortable about meeting recruiting goals in fiscal year 2023 and beyond. Additionally, projections remain lower than the necessary applicants needed to meet the Air National Guard combined Officer and Enlisted goal of 9,199; and the Reserve combined Officer and Enlisted goal of 8,200.

The Air Force is keenly aware of a growing competition for talent and expect the recruiting environment to become even more challenging. Today only 29 percent of 17 - 24 year old men and women in the United States are eligible to serve in the military and only one in eight have a propensity to serve. Additionally, the percentage of young Americans interested in joining the military is trending downward: a 2 percent drop from 13 percent to 11 percent in the last few years; a reduction of over two million candidates. Within this eligible population, the DAF seeks to increase our pool of diverse candidates and reach the best and brightest from across our Nation while making sure every eligible member who wants to serve has the opportunity.

To enhance our 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 percent. We surpassed that goal at the USAFA for the class of 2025, and 32.5 percent percent of the entering class were women. Last year's graduating class was more than 29.4 percent female, a 0.4 percent increase from 2020. Within our Reserve Officer Training Corps (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 (fiscal year 2021), a 3 percent increase since fiscal year 2016. Our fiscal year 2021 Officer Training School (OTS) Active Duty Air Force Line commissions were 19.2 percent female, a 2.5 percent increase since 2016. OTS additionally commissions Air Reserve Component Line officers, with fiscal year 2021 female representation of 19.8 percent percent, up 3 percent from fiscal year 2016, and conducts officer training for all Total Force Direct Commissions, with fiscal year 2021 female representation of 48 percent, up 3 percent from fiscal year 2016. The high participation of women in many of the medical career fields drives the large female ratio in this non-line accessions group." Finally, we launched "Inspire Ops", a STEM-based, aviation-focused, motivation and mentorship program designed to increase diversity and mitigate the pilot shortage across rated career fields. The program pairs high school students involved in youth aviation and STEM with students nominated by USAFA and Air

Force ROTC. 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. From fiscal year 2021 leading into fiscal year 2022, we executed 95 events, reached 1.2 million individuals, engaged 280,000 candidates, and increased audience by 6,500 on social media.

With a diverse pool of applicants it's imperative to have a talent management system to put airmen in a position to succeed while also improving diversity in under-represented career fields. In 2022, the DAF increased its focus on the Air Force Work Interest Navigator (AF-WIN) Survey tool designed to match enlisted recruits with Air Force career fields based on their own unique interests and skills. AF-WIN is a web-based tool that presents a series of questions to airmen on functional communities, job contexts and work activities. It uses an algorithm to create a customized career fit report on more than 130 enlisted Air Force careers tailored to the recruit's interests. Recruiters use the survey results for enhanced job counseling to provide more resources and information on career paths to potential recruits to help increase diversity in under-represented careers, improve job satisfaction, and retention efforts. Additionally, we expanded our job matching window, providing opportunities up to 5 months in the future (previously, we only made jobs available about 60-90 days in advance), with the goal of encouraging and placing recruits in the right job. Due to pandemic-related lockdowns, reduced interest in our target age range (18-24) and changes in medical processing, our job match window has reduced to a little over 30 days.

The Air Force is committed to improving how we recruit tomorrow's airmen. An assessment of recruiting squadron procedures and environmental challenges determined that the aggregate effects of 2 years of COVID (limited or no access to schools and lack of public engagement) atrophied significantly the required skills recruiters need to successfully communicate and sell the Air Force. Currently 62 percent of Active Duty recruiters have never recruited in a non-COVID environment. Toward the beginning of 2022, the DAF implemented an aggressive training plan to address training deficits and increase community presence. We are investing in a multi-year effort allowing the Regular Component year-round recruiting operations in order to meet Total Force accessions goals. Additionally, we have ongoing Total Force marketing improvements focused on underrepresented populations, academic institu-

tions and untapped geographic regions. We are marketing to Minority Serving Institutions and affinity-based professional organizations. We are using data provided by the DoD Joint Advertising Market Research & Studies (JAMRS) to implement a market segmentation approach at zip code level to recruit from growth and untapped potential areas to support greater diversity. Finally, we are working on screening methods to enhance our ability to prevent entry of those accessions who associate with supremacist, extremist, and criminal gang groups.

Finally, the DAF is leveraging predictive tests to ensure that applicants are compatible with serving. This compatibility includes assessing the risk of disciplinary and counterproductive workplace behaviors in potential recruits that might negatively impact well-being, morale and mission effectiveness. To do this, we administer the Tailored Adaptive Personality Assessment System to all recruits. This test identifies and measures an applicant's suitability and adjustment potential for life in the military with ongoing research and development to improve its utility.

#### *Retention*

While recruiting remains an imperative for the DAF, retention of our agile and ready force is equally essential. Even as the DAF is experiencing unprecedented high retention in some areas, there are areas which continue to experience retention challenges. In an effort to help alleviate these challenges, the DAF continues to offer targeted monetary incentives. For Active component enlisted skills, the DAF has programed \$197 million for the fiscal year 2022 Selective Retention Bonus program, which, when approved, targets critical capabilities in enlisted Air Force and Space Force Specialty Codes with low manning percentages, low retention, and/or high training costs, such as special warfare, aircraft maintenance, cyber, and intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance.

The Aviation Bonus (AvB) is strategic talent-management tool tailored annually through our Business Case Model and specifically designed to retain the proper number of experienced aviators in order to improve readiness and maintain lethality of the force. The AvB program is very cost effective means of talent management when compared to the costs and time needed to replace very experienced aviators.

The fiscal year 2022 AvB Business Case Model factored manning levels (current and forecast), retention trends (current and trend), cost and time to replace experienced aviators as well as career field health stressors such as very aggressive airline hiring trends, economic recovery, projected Field Grade Officer (FGO) shortages in fiscal year 2025, aircraft onboarding 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 our top priorities for retention incentives followed closely by Remotely Piloted Aircraft pilots, Air Battle Managers and Combat System Officers. With a budget of \$205.7 million, the Active component fiscal year 2022 AvB offers both short-term (defined as 3 years minimum) and long-term (defined as 5 years or more) contracts options and incentivizes long-term contracts with increased annual amounts and larger lump sum payments in the longer term contract categories.

We will continue to modify these annual programs to decisively and deliberately shape the rated force while practicing fiscal responsibility.

#### *Force Management*

Although DAF retention remains higher than years past, likely due to the lingering effects of the pandemic and economy, we are starting to see balance and stabilization. In fiscal year 2021 the DAF experienced the highest retention rate amongst officers in 20 years and the enlisted force experienced the second highest in 20 years, after fiscal year 2020. Although high retention has helped the DAF maintain immediate readiness levels, we ended fiscal year 2021 approximately 1,159 over our authorized end strength and started fiscal year 2022 at 334,634. We continue to focus our attention on balancing high retention while sustaining the force overtime leaving enough headspace to access the talent we need year after year. Additionally, we have continued to draw down the Voluntary Retired Return to Active Duty and the Voluntary Limited Period of Active Duty accessions programs given our high retention levels. We are monitoring retention closely to manage impacts to future readiness levels. We are preparing for fiscal year 2023 and the possibility of continued high retention, recognizing we may need additional flexibility. We want to remain agile as we look to the future, knowing we need to preserve our ability to recruit and retain new talent.

## MANAGING TALENT

The Air Force's Talent Management systems continue to transform in order to fully support the National Defense Strategy and DOD guidance, develop inclusive leaders of competence and character, and produce the talent we need for the future high-end fight. Most DAF talent management initiatives are directed towards a system that empowers 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 what we value, measuring those key items, and incentivizing and rewarding those who demonstrate and excel at the valued qualities.

*Innovation Workforce*

The USAF is continuously finding new ways to improve our capacity to find, support, and nurture the innovation and Cyber workforce that ultimately supports the warfighter and encourages innovative best practices. We are currently working on how to best align and create developmental pathways for airmen with innovative skills, both military and civilian, within their current communities but also across functional communities. Innovators partnering with experts in leading technology will be critical to building multi-capable airmen. The DAF is exploring efficient ways to identify people with critical operational talent, including cyber, technology and STEM arenas. Leadership must be ready to support and enhance innovators willing to step into these roles.

*Air Force Talent Management Initiatives*

The Air Force is committed to transforming the way we develop, promote, and retain our officer corps in order to successfully carry out the National Defense Strategy. To meet that task, we must have a force which can adapt, innovate, and demonstrate agility in dealing with today's complex security environment.

We have continued our focus on improving the flexibilities of our workforce and appreciate the additional authorities allowed in the fiscal year 2022 National Defense Authorization Act. We are exploring implementation of many of those authorities as well as expanding on authorities from recent year NDAA's. I am excited to announce the Air Force's recent expansion of the Career Intermission Program for our military members to step away from their Active Duty commitment without any impact to their career advancement opportunities or competitiveness. Using the authority from the fiscal year 2022 NDAA, we recently announced that effective December 27th, 2021, airmen will now experience a 1-to-1 payback option for months served in Career Intermission instead of the legacy 2-to-1 payback by month. There may be specific situations in which one-year participation will still require a two-year commitment upon a member's return, such as a PCS-based Active Duty Service Commitment or ADSCs totaling less than 12 months. At the end of 2021, 12 Officers and 33 enlisted servicemembers are participating in the program.

We have also continued our focus on improving the flexibilities of our workforce and appreciate the additional authorities allowed in the fiscal year 2022 National Defense Authorization Act. We are exploring implementation of many of those authorities as well as expanding on authorities from recent year NDAA's. I am pleased to report 2021 was the first full-year the Air Force used merit-based reordering of officers selected for promotion. This new talent management authority allows for promotion acceleration based on performance-based potential while still enabling increased experience and development in order to foster a more lethal and ready force. Additionally, the Air Force implemented the new policy allowing officers to opt-out of selection board consideration in late 2021. This option affords our workforce more personal control of their own career management, satisfying individual balance of mission fulfillment and flexibility for personal desires, without risking non-selection in-the-promotion zone or involuntary separation. To date, the Air Force has approved all nine promotion opt-out packages presented to the Secretary of the Air Force.

Additionally, we have shifted our entire military performance evaluation system to a modern 21st century IT application. This sets the conditions for the Air Force to accelerate enhancing our broader feedback and performance report systems. These are the systems our airmen rely on as the framework to document performance and develop leader behaviors within our ranks. With the transition, we augment our focus on describing the results airmen delivered with assessments of airman leadership qualities. That is, we augmented what we value in airmen performance to include assessments of how airmen behave and demonstrate competency in doing so. Last month we transitioned all airmen to use the airman leadership qualities in performance feedback and in the coming months of 2022, we will transition our performance assessment, or the military evaluation, to also be based on these

same airman leadership qualities. As part of this transition, we are updating performance reports to ensure leaders are accountable for their unit climates. In the future, our new performance evaluation system will support more agile transitions in data-based talent management approaches.

This new competency-based, data-first approach to talent management ensures we align our values with the behaviors and performance assessments in our evaluation programs. This is crucial as these evaluations are central to selecting our best airmen for promotion, career advancement development, critical command and senior enlisted leader duties, joint and interagency duties, and so the many other developmental assignments vital to maintaining our competitive edge as an Air Force.

Finally, the Air Force is exploring how to implement military commander and key leader assessments that augment the current command screening boards, prior to command selection. We have a short-term beta test under development that will inform a future permanent and sustainable approach to robust the information considered during selection for command. Our beta test has integrated three new components alongside the traditional record of performance review. These new components include use of a 360-degree feedback survey and assessment of derailing behaviors. In the future, we will pilot in-person cognitive and non-cognitive assessments, an interview by an operational psychologist, as well as peer and subordinate feedback. These new approaches will ensure we consider the whole-person view of strength areas or growth areas of officers selected for command. Additionally, as part of our commitment to development, we will observe and coach officers who participate in these additional assessments to identify gaps or concerns in their ability to understand, grow, and learn the strengths and weaknesses in their ability to lead.

The Air Force is actively re-examining how we develop airmen over the continuum of their careers and aligning that development to the behaviors we value in our airman leadership qualities, for formal and informal leaders. This emphasis on development and alignment with our values will result in new officer selection processes for the Air Force, ensuring our leaders have the highest levels of character and competence, as well as identifying behaviors requiring adjustment before taking on command and leadership roles.

#### *Civilian Talent Management*

The DAF values the talent and skills our civilian workforce brings to the fight and fully recognize that Air and Space Force missions cannot succeed without them. The DAF Civilian Strategic Human Capital Plan provides the strategic direction for managing the workforce around three over-arching human capital objectives: 1) deliver talent; 2) Maximize Employee Performance; 3) Enhance and Transform Civilian Human Resources. These objectives are supported by a number of human capital strategies and initiatives designed to increase effectiveness and foster a high performing and engaged culture that leverages the diversity and talent within the civilian workforce.

An important component of our civilian talent management efforts is focused on the cyber workforce. The DOD cyber workforce comprises military, civilian, and contractor personnel who build, secure, operate, defend, and protect DOD and U.S. cyberspace resources; conduct related intelligence activities; enable future operations; and project power in or through cyberspace. The Office of the DoD Chief Information Officer initiated the Cyber Excepted Service (CES) personnel system to support the employment of a highly skilled cyber workforce and the 2018 Cyber Strategy goal to mature the implementation of the CES personnel system across the DOD. CES is designed for civilian employees engaged in, or in support of, certain cyber-related missions and activities (i.e. IT management, artificial intelligence, computer science, computer operations and software engineering). Additionally, CES uses both competitive (Title 5) and excepted (Title 10) service authorities to enhance workforce talent management. Most civilian employees are hired through the competitive service; however, the Office of Personnel Management provides excepted service hiring authorities to fill special positions or to fill positions in unusual or special circumstances. DAF's participation in the two-phased implementation resulted in USCYBERCOM and other DAF cyber supporting units being included in the CES. In March 2019, the USCYBERCOM Commander testified before the House Armed Services Committee that the average time to hire cyber workforce professionals before the CES was 111 days; however, with the implementation of the CES, the average time to hire was reduced to approximately 44 days. Currently, DAF has over 550 positions under CES with ~200 being civilian cyber professionals.

#### *Civilian Short-Term Experiential Program*

The DAF has numerous civilian education and development opportunities. Many of these require geographic mobility; however, our Racial Disparity Review indicated



that the expectation for geographic mobility could be a barrier to women and some minorities. In response, the DAF is piloting a new short-term civilian development opportunity called the Civilian Short-Term Experiential Program (CSTEP). The purpose of CSTEP is to allow selectees to 1) Develop cross-functional leadership competencies through a short-term experiential assignment that does not require long term mobility; 2) Enhance development of self, others, and organizations; 3) Gain breadth of experience in a different role; and 4) Gain access senior leader mentorship. CSTEP's pilot period is expected to start in Academic Year 2023. The new program selection board will identify the first slate of candidates in Spring 2022, alongside the rest of the existing opportunities associated with the DAF Civilian Development Education Portfolio such as in-residence intermediate and senior developmental education, full-time bachelor and/or master degree programs, et cetera.

We are also excited at the progress we've made in managing our civilian talent, most notably in our hiring timeliness by leveraging special hiring and compensation authorities. The DAF has dropped average days of hiring from 114 days in 2019 to 82.5 days in 2021. This is much needed progress, but still not where we would like to be, and we continue to work on hiring timeliness. Additionally, the DAF is investing in human resource capacity by continuously evaluating our current processes and systems, seeking opportunities to streamline. For example, the Air Force Materiel Command refined its existing centralized selection and hiring process, moving recruitment responsibility for entry-level, developmental positions to Centralized Hiring Cells in an effort to increase diversity across the field while improving employment timelines. Approximately 2,000 developmental positions will be filled annually through Centralized Selection Cells at each AFMC center. In addition, AFMC has also made concerted efforts to improve new employee on-boarding and acculturation, leveraging the USAF Connect mobile application (Apple Store) (Google Play), a digital new employee handbook and diverse technologies to ensure new employees are able to get in the office, on the network, trained and be mission-effective on day one.

The DAF instituted the Premier College Intern Program (PCIP) in 2018 with several goals. First, recruit 500 post-secondary students for internships annually under Direct Hire Authority, Section 1102 of National Defense Authorization Act. Second, make the program more STEM focused. Third, non-competitively place graduating PCIP interns into a permanent position or Palace Acquire/Copper Capstone (PAQ) entry level position. Today, between 450–500 PCIP students graduate into our formal intern training programs; since 2018, 1,885 PCIPs have been hired and the DAF currently has 496 PCIPs on board. As of Sep 2021, the retention rate of PCIP interns is 81 percent. In addition, DAF has 1600 PAQ interns in 2022.

The Science, Mathematics, and Research for Transformation (SMART) Scholarship-for-Service Program, part of the DOD science, technology, engineering and mathematics portfolio, provides STEM students with the tools needed to pursue higher education and begin or continue rewarding careers with the DAF. Since its inception in 2006, the DAF has sponsored 1,186 SMART scholars with 855 DAF-sponsored scholars completing bachelors, masters, or doctoral STEM degrees and being outplaced from the SMART program as DAF STEM civilian professionals. During this time, the DAF has been able to fulfill critical STEM gaps across the DAF in organizations such as the Air Force Sustainment Center, Air Force Research Laboratory, Air Force Life Cycle Management Center, Air Force Nuclear Weapons Center, Air Force Test Center, National Air & Space Intelligence Center, and the Air Force Studies Analysis & Assessments Office. The SMART scholars the DAF has selected the past 2 years were selected to ensure the DAF has a STEM workforce trained and developed in those critical National Defense Emerging Technology areas for the DAF to include, but not limited to, artificial intelligence, autonomy, hypersonics, 5G, quantum, microelectronics, space technology, biotechnology, advanced computing, and integrated sensing and cyber. In 2021, the DAF sponsored 116 SMART scholars.

We also developed a program to allow individuals that become medically disqualified at BMT a second opportunity to serve. The "DRIVE" Program is a newly established program that provides medically disqualified candidates an opportunity to enter the DAF civilian service. DRIVE is a Total Force talent recruiting initiative which benefits the entire Air Force. Using special appointing authorities such as direct hire, the DAF is able to match candidates to hiring needs. Since August 2020, the initiative has already successfully placed seven candidates in diverse career fields such as civil engineering, public affairs, and cyber security.

The DAF continues to identify new initiatives and advocate for effective hiring and retention authorities to secure mission critical civilian talent. We recently obtained a temporary direct hire authority as well as a temporary qualification waiver

for our 2181 series pilots and simulator operators, recognizing the dated qualification standards which specify significant cockpit flying hours do not adequately address changes in technology that allow for civilian flight instruction to be accomplished in a simulator. DAF continues to work with DOD, the Services and with the Office of Personnel Management to ensure updated qualification and classification standards for both our 2181 pilots and simulator operators, as well as our 2152 Air Traffic Controllers.

We are continuing to demonstrate the Air Force's commitment to fielding innovative talent management programs that deliver on our goal of developing the airmen and civilians of tomorrow. Our efforts are ensuring we prioritize talent management innovations that deliver experiences and programs that reinforce the USAF as an attractive career choice for our airmen and their families. This is directly connected to ensuring we retain the absolute best airmen we need for our Air Force to continue to deliver our mission delivering our Nation's defense.

#### *Diversity & Inclusion*

Diversity and Inclusion are force multipliers and warfighting imperatives. The DAF must be able to draw from the best and brightest talent across our Nation to recruit, develop and retain a force comprised of the diverse backgrounds, experience, and skillsets

The DAF's Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Accessibility (DEIA) Strategy focuses on four key areas to further diversity and inclusion efforts. First, the DAF is 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, we are championing a culture of inclusion by establishing education and training throughout personnel lifecycles. Finally, the DAF is institutionalizing DEIA principles through best practices, analysis and feedback into policy.

Further, we continue to operationalize diversity and inclusion to better recruit and retain top talent. On March 8, 2022, the DAF announced the Caregiver provision for separation. This provision allows either member of a DAF military-to-military Active Duty couple to apply for voluntary separation after the birth or adoption of a child. This important provision provides further flexibility for airmen to potentially remain on Active Duty and also gives both parents more time to understand what is required to balance a family and career before making a decision to separate. To provide further support during the process, the DAF offers the option for members to use MyVector, a creative and innovative online mentoring system available for new parents, to find mentors that can provide support and guidance as they navigate service and family. In addition, as you are aware, the fiscal year 2022 National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) authorized 14 days of bereavement leave for servicemembers upon the death of certain family members. We are working in close partnership with OSD to update policy, ensuring our members can use this critical new entitlement.

#### *Digital Transformation*

The Air Force continues to make strides transforming a portfolio of outdated systems that consume our airman's time, energy and flexibility when handling their Human Resource business affairs. We are now beginning to really provide our airmen with cutting edge cloud based technologies that drastically improves their experience, enhances data protection, and opens the opportunity for mobile access; however, there is much more to do. We need our airman to have the ability to remain mission focused, and are ensuring they have a streamlined end-to-end experience with this much needed upgrade. Your continued support in our Digital Transformation efforts are appreciated.

#### 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. Ms. Patricia Mulcahy, Chief Human Capital Officer, United States Space Force.

**STATEMENT OF PATRICIA MULCAHY, DEPUTY CHIEF OF  
SPACE OPERATIONS FOR PERSONNEL, UNITED STATES  
SPACE FORCE**

Ms. MULCAHY. Chairwoman Gillibrand, Ranking Member Tillis, distinguished Members of the Committee, thank you for the leadership and support you have provided to the United States Space Force, our guardians, and their families. It is a privilege to come before you today alongside my service colleagues.

The cornerstone of our Space Force is our people. We are purposefully building a service of guardians capable of securing the space domain, integrating deterrence, and enabling the joint war fight today and into the future. To attract, recruit, and develop this talent we need, we crafted and published the Guardian Ideal, our human capital strategic plan. Our approach is grounded in our values of character, above all, connections through unity, commitment to the profession, and the courage to be bold.

The Guardian Ideal modernizes our approach to recruitment and retention, fosters connection among guardians, puts a focus on enabling a digital force, and integrates wellness and resiliency. With our small numbers, we believe it vital to strengthen the diverse teams comprised of both uniformed and civilian guardians with a tailored talent management approach. We are competing for talent with the well-paid and dynamic space industry.

Part of our vision to grow and sustain our Active and Reserve force is by creating a new space component that provides greater flexibility for our guardians and commanders in the field. This approach could ensure our members do not have to choose between their military careers and their personal lives by encouraging continued participation.

The space component would extend the continuum of service, enable us to recruit and retain the exquisite, highly technical force we need in an efficient and effective and fiscally sound manner. Implementation would be a groundbreaking approach to military human capital management and build a component that improves warfighting readiness with a consistent, coherent means to employ the force.

Over the past 2 years, we secured a number of wins for our Nation. I am proud of the more than 13,500 military and civilian guardians who joined our ranks from the Air Force, the Army, the Navy, and the Marine Corps, as well as from across America. We launched recruiting initiatives to ensure we are competitive for the STEM talent we need.

We instituted improved interview questions to help us determine the best fit for our future guardians and to reach into a more diverse applicant pool. We have finalized our foundational warfighting competencies that capture what all guardians will bring to the team, and we have developed occupational competencies for all of our uniform space power disciplines.

We are using a boot camp approach to training software coders, resulting in increased digital fluency and positive impacts to mission accomplishment. We are developing a performance appraisal system with a more continuous evaluation approach that captures the inputs of subordinates, peers, and superiors to provide a more

comprehensive and timely picture of guardian performance contributions and alignment to our values.

We are appreciative of the existing military compensation package, but with such a small, highly specialized technical force, we often struggle to compete with the high salaries commanded in the private sector.

The Space Force needs a compensation package that not only recognizes the service of guardians and their families but provides the incentives necessary to recruit and retain these highly sought after professionals. To that end, we are carefully reviewing all current incentive authorities and exploring innovative ways to retain talent, especially of our experienced noncommissioned officers.

We recognize that attracting and retaining talent is not about compensation alone. It is also about providing a sense of purpose and an inclusive culture. We are actively engaging and involving guardians at every step in creating and building our culture that recognizes the value and contributions of all guardians, military and civilian.

We believe that our unique culture and mission, with a new space component construct, combined with quality of life programs and a well-structured compensation package, will allow us to attract and retain the guardian talent we need.

Although I am pleased with the progress we have made, we have much work to do in this third year of building our Space Force. We will continue to focus on our innovative approaches to talent management, developing leaders and warfighters, and we count on the support of Congress to develop and field this new component that will capitalize on the diverse talent of our Nation's guardians to secure America's interests in space and enable joint operations.

Thank you, and I look forward to your questions.

[The prepared statement of Ms. Patricia Mulcahy follows:]

#### PREPARED STATEMENT BY MS. PATRICIA MULCAHY

##### INTRODUCTION

Chairwoman Gillibrand, Ranking Member Tillis, Distinguished Members of this Committee, thank you for the opportunity to appear before this committee. As the Nation's newest military Service, it is exciting to come before you today to discuss the progress our guardians have made to build and manage a force capable of defending our Nation's vital interest in the space domain.

##### THE FORCE WE NEED

The United States Space Force (USSF) operates in a unique and dynamic personnel environment. In September 2021, the Space Force released the Guardian Ideal which outlines our innovative approach to talent management of our military and civilians from accession through development and combines aspirations with actions and milestones. Our objective is to build and develop a highly-skilled, unified, and inclusive force capable of operating in the complex space domain. We intend to have a more holistic approach to talent management, incorporating work-life balance, family support, resiliency, training, education and individualized development into the Guardian Ideal. Part of this holistic approach includes the integration of our Reserve Space Professionals.

Even as we continue building the Space Force, the needs of the Nation dictate that we are operationally capable of deterring conflict and defending our Nation's interests immediately and boldly. This demand cannot wait for us to finish building the force. To this end, we continue developing the training, systems and experiences necessary to be the digital force required in today's fight. At the same time, we are enhancing our end strength through new accessions to include inter-service trans-

fers, exploring lateral entry opportunities, and taking advantage of civilian personnel systems and authorities to increase our civilian personnel capacity.

#### SPACE COMPONENT

The ability to attract, recruit, and retain high caliber talent in the Space Force is essential to the success of our service. The Space Component provides us an opportunity to grow and sustain the force by creating a new component consisting of full- and part-time members, eliminating the distinctions found in the traditional regular/Reserve construct, making it easier for guardians to serve and providing greater flexibility to commanders.

We are competing for talent with the high-paying space industry. The Space Component extends the continuum of service, enabling us to recruit and retain the exquisite, highly-technical force we need, in an efficient, effective, and fiscally sound manner, while decreasing overall bureaucracy. We have one chance to get this right. The Space Force is at an early stage of development where we could implement this ground-breaking approach to military human capital management and build a component that improves warfighting readiness with a consistent, coherent means to employ the force.

We realize that Congressional authorities and authorizations are necessary to achieve these goals and we are appreciative of your continued support.

#### DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION

Operationalizing Diversity and Inclusion is critical to Space Force talent management. Space Force continued efforts to support the General Officer Inspire, which is an initiative that the Chief of Space Operations co-signed with the Chief of Staff of the Air Force that proactively seeks and develops youth. The objective is to have USSF senior leaders engage with youth and youth influencers from underrepresented groups in order to increase our diversity in the rated career fields as well as the broader Air and Space Force. We recently stood up a Cultural Management Working Group, a cross-functional team of guardians. Through a collaborative effort, this team identifies forward-looking approaches and best practices to foster a culture in which Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Accessibility principles are optimized, supports continuous improvement, and promotes a safe and respectful workplace. The desired outcomes are to enhance our talent acquisition efforts to promote a workforce that reflects the diverse population of the United States, including those from underserved communities and to improve retention among both military and civilian guardians to meet the National Security goals and objectives.

#### END STRENGTH

The Department's FY22 Active Duty military end strength request for 337,620 included 8,400 for Space Force. This increases our end strength by 1,966 due to anticipated mission transfers from the Air Force, Army and Navy. In FY23, the military end strength requests will be separated and Space Force will have its own appropriation; with projected growth from 8,400 to 8,600. To meet this goal, the Space Force will continue to manage military personnel inventory to support mission requirements and we appreciate the Congressional support.

#### RECRUITING

The competitive market for STEM talent creates a significant challenge to attracting and recruiting individuals with those unique capabilities into the Space Force. The Department of the Air Force, through Air Force Recruiting Service, has met Space Force recruiting goals to acquire exceptional talent for STEM and cyber-related disciplines for this complex mission set. While we have been successful to date, the recruiting landscape is dynamic; there is a high demand for talent in these technical communities, across the Department of Defense, U.S. Government, and industry.

Our recruitment initiatives are focused on expanding the pool of potential STEM applicants through partnerships with colleges, universities, and organizations that produce diverse STEM capable personnel. The Space Force University Partnership Program (UPP) offers the opportunity for a strategic partnership with the nation's top universities possessing high academic standards, nationally-ranked STEM degree programs, world-renowned space-related research and established Reserve Officer Training Corps (ROTC) detachments. Additionally, the UPP schools' interests align with USSF's long-term science and technology priorities. The UPP's goal is to develop a diverse, highly capable workforce and advance strategic focus areas of the USSF and to pursue critical science and technology topics that are important to the

USSF. This program creates opportunities for advanced academic degrees as well as workforce and leadership development for USSF Guardians. The UPP provides a broad range of scholarship, internship and mentorship opportunities for university students and ROTC cadets with the goal of recruiting and developing diverse officer, enlisted, and civilian guardians with a particular focus on STEM.

While we focus on STEM talent as a whole, we cannot afford to overlook individuals with those attributes consistent with guardian values. To ensure we right size our applicant pool and select future guardians from the most diverse talent possible, we have instituted a national selection process that casts a wider talent net. Additionally, we have implemented interviews, diverse selection panels, and behavioral assessments to expand the tools used for a holistic approach to selecting future guardians. These newly implemented guardian selection efforts facilitate our ability to select the best fit guardians from the broadest reach.

The Space Force is working with the Department of Defense and Department of the Air Force stakeholders to mitigate potential barriers to service from members of underrepresented groups. We are conducting a comprehensive review of accessions policy and will review all career field entry requirements and assessments to identify opportunities to expand the pool of potential applicants from underrepresented groups.

Equally important to recruiting exceptional talent is the ability to retain the talent we have, and to engage and compensate our workforce in a manner that encourages retention. Our guardians who transferred from another Service are still under a two-year service commitment, so we do not yet have retention data unique to the Space Force. We expect to see a normal attrition rate, but can adjust our initial accessions, prior-service accessions, and any normal workforce shaping tools as we see fluctuations in those retention patterns.

#### MANAGING TALENT

The Space Force is taking a fresh approach to talent management in order to build an organizational culture that emboldens guardians to produce innovative outcomes to secure American interests in space and contribute our unique expertise in joint operations. Our Talent Management Office (TMO) is leading the implementation of the guardian Ideal, the Space Force's Human Capital Plan in a multi-pronged approach. First, through building a competency based requirement system and inventorying all competencies and levels of mastery for each guardian, the TMO can make informed and connected development and assignment decisions, which leads to greater guardian involvement in their careers and greater mission accomplishment. Additionally, we are developing a new performance appraisal system to focus more on contribution to the team and mission, which include multi-sourced input from all team members, and provide a continuous assessment as opposed to one time a year. We are tying this competency framework back to the Guardian Commitment, the foundation of the Space Force, built upon our values of character, connection, commitment, and courage.

We expect leaders at every level to take bold, data-driven, and risk-informed actions, while making full use of their team's diverse abilities to overcome challenges to accomplish our mission as set forth in the National Defense Strategy and in line with Congressional intent.

#### DEVELOPMENT

The Space Force will shift from managing people within prescribed career fields, to managing positions based on the competencies and experiences needed to succeed. We are completing work on a comprehensive competency framework that addresses not just occupational skills, but also those attributes necessary to succeed as a part of an inclusive and high-performing team. As part of managing talent we will include O-6s in Talent Marketplace this year bringing all guardians, officer and enlisted, (O-6 and below as well as E-9 and below) into the same talent management tool for development and assignments. The inclusion of the guardian's voice enables transparent choice architecture across the enterprise to meet both personal strengths and Service needs.

#### PERFORMANCE EVALUATION

Our performance appraisal system is in development and our vision is to shift from an annual to a continuous 360 approach that will capture the inputs of subordinates, peers, and superiors. This provides a more complete and timely picture of how a guardian is performing and growing over time to include while working outside their assigned team. The appraisal system will be an important component of an enhanced approach toward assessing promotion potential and readiness. Current

approaches rely almost exclusively on the informed opinion of our senior leaders within strict timelines and percentage constraints. This is a good approach, but we now have access to improved tools that will provide more data that speaks to potential more objectively and consistently across the entire force. Various talent management boards will benefit with the inclusion of data derived from behavioral assessments and the results of situation-based testing that evaluates members based on how they perform in challenging situations they may encounter in the next higher grade or position of increased responsibility. The scientific studies in these areas show these tools better predict who will succeed at the next level and also the individuals we need to develop further before they are ready for the next rank. This deliberate approach toward individualized development will enhance guardians both personally and professionally.

We are actively and thoughtfully instituting policy and process changes to bring us into closer alignment to the future state described in the Guardian Ideal. For example, for non-commissioned officer promotions, we have eliminated promotion testing, stratifications, and forced distribution. Additionally, the Space Force has included personal preference into officer and enlisted development teams (DTs). This has been accomplished using MyVector, a web-based mentoring network, as a data collection tool where guardians can provide their personal preferences, as well as personal considerations, into the system to ensure the talent management board members are cognizant and make talent management decisions that include the guardian's voice and competencies. Developmental processes follow the promotion boards to place new selects into appropriate positions commensurate with the new selected grade.

We also intend to evolve the performance appraisal collection platform to capture information on work place environment to identify work climate issues in a timely manner so we can investigate and, if necessary, intervene before potential issues become problems. This is a vital component of the physically and psychologically safe environment that we owe all of our guardians, both civilian and military.

The USSF will continue to implement recommendations from the Secretary of Defense's Independent Review Commission. These recommendations hold leaders and servicemembers appropriately accountable for problematic behaviors but also sets the precedent and expectation to engage in positive behaviors that benefit the unit as a whole. Leaders at all levels are being educated on prevention strategies and delivering informed prevention messages which prepares our guardians to positively impact the overall culture. This focus on core values and engaged leadership will enable guardians to be successful as they are evaluated and held accountable for prevention activities.

#### PAY AND COMPENSATION

The Space Force is dedicated to ensuring that all guardians are appropriately compensated for their service. Military compensation must be designed to meet the financial needs of guardians and their families and make the Space Force competitive in the market for highly qualified talent. On the whole, we believe that the current military compensation system is generous and accomplishes these goals.

Total compensation, includes basic pay, the Basic Allowance for Housing (BAH), the Basic Allowance for Subsistence (BAS), health care benefits, retirement benefits, the tax advantage of pays like BAH and BAS, special and incentive pays and bonuses, and many other benefits. This network of pays, allowance, and other benefits compares favorably with private industry and civilian employment.

Increases to basic pay, the foundation of military compensation, are based upon the Employment Cost Index. We believe this is the correct measure for across-the-board increases to the basic pay table. Other indexes, like the Consumer Price Index, capture costs that are already accounted for in allowances like BAH, BAS, and COLA.

While the Space Force believes that across-the-board increases to the basic pay table should continue to take into account ECI, we also believe there is an opportunity to explore more targeted increases to the basic pay table at noncommissioned officer ranks in order to ensure retention of these highly skilled leaders.

Recent surveys have indicated food insecurity concerns at the most junior ranks. Congress acted to address these concerns with the Basic Needs Allowance in the FY21 NDAA. The Space Force is looking forward to implementing this pay, and is working with the Department of Defense and sister Service partners to develop enduring solutions to concerns over the adequacy of military compensation. While we believe that military compensation is adequate and competitive in the aggregate, we see an opportunity for targeted change.

## PERMANENT CHANGE OF STATION

The Space Force assignments process supports our talent management philosophy in alignment with operational mission requirements. We value gaining competencies through development as well as contribution to the team and mission rather than moving. We have far fewer geographic locations compared to other services, and there are more career development opportunities in a single geographic location providing greater stability for the guardian, their families and their units. In many instances, there are multiple development possibilities at the guardian's current assignment location where Permanent Change of Assignments (PCA) (no move) are executed versus Permanent Change of Station (PCS), which allow for heightened stability for families through more stable spouse employment and military child education, amongst other issues.

Since the creation of the Space Force, the average stateside tour length for guardian officers has been approximately 36 months and for enlisted guardians it has been approximately 40 months. There will be some cases where this timing will be shorter than expected because we have prioritized moving guardians from their Air Force assignment to one in the Space Force. As a small force, we want to target most of our moves in the July timeframe to support retention and family considerations such as school and career transfers for military spouses and children.

## UNITED STATES AIR FORCE SUPPORT

As a growing Service, and one that must remain lean, agile, and mission-focused, we are grateful to have the continued support of the United States Air Force and the Department of the Air Force across a wide range of personnel and family support activities and programs. Interpersonal violence, sexual assault prevention and response, suicide prevention, resiliency, and family care are all areas in which the Air Force maintains the lead role and are vital to the wellbeing and retention of guardians. The Department of the Air Force has also taken the lead role in diversity and inclusion initiatives. As we continue to grow, some of these functions will transfer to the Space Force, however, many of them will remain with the Air Force and the Department of the Air Force. We are truly a one-team-one fight organization, and we are grateful for the continued efforts of all members of our team.

## CONCLUSION

Guardians are the heart of the Space Force. In order to achieve mission success, we must create an environment that fosters their success and recognizes their value, both as individuals and as members of a team. We must develop each guardian according to their individual capabilities and desires within the context of Space Force requirements. We must provide inclusive leadership that encourages growth. We must provide guardians the tools, digital and otherwise, necessary to accomplish the mission. We must provide an environment in which they and their families feel safe and supported against any internal threat, an environment where they can thrive. We must ensure that we are doing right by our guardians and their families. All of this, of course, requires your support, and funding. We thank you for your continued support for our Space Force, its uniformed and civilian guardians, and their families.

Senator GILLIBRAND. Thank you all for your testimony. I would like to start with, Ms. Mulcahy, about the Space Force. Can you tell me what your complement is currently? How many civilian personnel and how many military personnel you have, and what is your goal?

Ms. MULCAHY. Yes, absolutely. Thanks for that question, Madame Chairwoman. Today we have 7,051 military guardians, and we have 7,875 civilians. We will plus up a little bit on the civilians, too, next year, and by the end of September, we should be at 8,400. We are still gaining some units from within the Department.

So, for instance, in fiscal year 2023, the Space Development Agency will come from OSD into the Space Force, and we anticipate being as high as 8,600 military in fiscal year 2023.

Senator GILLIBRAND. Is it difficult for you to retain the best talent because of things like lack of salary competition to vis-à-vis the Facebooks and the Googles of the world?



Ms. MULCAHY. Yes. Thanks for that question, Chairwoman. Our concern right now is that all of our military guardians, when they came over, took a two year service commitment, and those start to come up in the September, October timeframe of this year.

So we are staying connected to our guardians, and we so far don't hear or see the numbers different than when we were part of the Air Force and managing our space operators. But we are concerned because we know that the space industry is very lucrative and that is where a lot our Non Commissioned Officers (NCOs) go.

Senator GILLIBRAND. You don't have a designated service academy, so do you receive cadets and graduates from all the service academies? What is the general break out of that?

Ms. MULCAHY. Thanks for that question too. The last—and this will be year three that we will have cadets come from the United States Air Force Academy. The numbers have been, this year we are planning 102. Last year, they were 106. So just about that number. The first year there were 96. This year will be the first year that will have two midshipmen come from the Naval Academy.

In working with the Army, it will probably be next year where we will have our first cadets come from the Army.

Senator GILLIBRAND. From the West—from West Point?

Ms. MULCAHY. From West Point.

Senator GILLIBRAND. I ask this because our first panel, we asked about the cyber academy. One of the things that Senator Tillis and I and members of the Intel committee have worked on is the cyber academy for the civilian workforce. Since obviously recruiting the top cyber digital talent, the best mathematicians in the world is a tough order. But we have something like 40,000 to 60,000 open cyber and digital positions in the Federal Government today that we cannot fill.

Looking at our long term goals, we believe that creating a national cyber academy, a four year degree for civilian workforce, for the Federal Government would be the appropriate next step to fill spaces within CIA [Central Intelligence Agency], NSA [National Security Agency], NGA, Treasury, Commerce, but also Space Force.

So I would like to know your thoughts on whether a national cyber academy would be useful to you to recruit at least your civilian personnel, but I could see creating coursework specifically designed for Space Force personnel, both military and civilian. I would like your thoughts on whether we should try to create that in this year's NDAA.

Ms. MULCAHY. Yes. Thank you for asking that, chairwoman. Absolutely, we are on the hunt for cyber talent. I know in particular, our Air Force Academy has really increased in their curriculum what we are doing in cyber and cybersecurity.

In our university partnership program, we specifically have looked at universities that not only meet what we are looking for in space research and space talent, but also digital and cybersecurity. The idea of an academy that would specifically be targeted for civilians, I think is a really interesting one and certainly would help us in the Space Force. As I gave you the numbers were about a 50 percent military, 50 percent civilian.

Senator GILLIBRAND. Yes, that is what I——

Ms. MULCAHY. So I think that could be—yes, ma'am——

Senator GILLIBRAND. That is what I thought. The other reason I suggest this is because we are going to use the current partners we have in the—in academia that we already partner with through one of the NSA programs, as well as two other programs, one is a DOD program, and the other one is a National Science Foundation Program.

These are very small programs where they will use existing relationships with schools like MIT [Massachusetts Institute of Technology] or Stanford to basically have an ROTC [Reserve Officer Training Corps] style educational relationship. So you can be trained at these private institutions, but in exchange for your tuition, you will serve 5 years. Is that something that would be useful to the Space Force?

Ms. MULCAHY. I think, absolutely, Chairwoman. We, with the help of the Air Force, have established four year scholarships at some 11 institutions, 2 that you mentioned in particular MIT and Stanford, and others that, again, will produce the kind of talent that we are looking for in the Space Force. So I think that could be very helpful, for the civilian side as well.

Senator GILLIBRAND. Grateful. I would like you to perhaps collaborate with the work that Secretary Cisneros has been tasked to do with Chief Information Officer in Section 56 of the 2022 Defense Bill to opine on the benefits of the National Cyber Academy to train future civilian and military personnel. I would like you to submit to that review your views in writing so that they have the benefit of your thinking on how this could be of use to Space Force needs in the future.

I have questions for each of the witnesses today that I will submit for the record that you can answer by letter, because I have to go vote now. I will let Senator Tillis ask his questions and close this hearing. I just want to thank you for your extraordinary service and for all you are doing for our men and women who are serving so bravely.

Without your leadership and your absolute attention to their needs and their education and their well-being, we would not have the amazing force that we have today. So, thank you very much. Senator Tillis.

Senator TILLIS. Thank you, Madam Chair. Thank you all for being here. I have a general question for all the witnesses, and then I have got a few service line specific questions. I am curious, Senator Hawley asked this of Secretary Cisneros, and General Ottignon, you and I talked about it yesterday, can you just go down the line and tell me the number of people who have been separated as a result of their refusal to get the vaccine, and if you have the information or even just can speculate, occupational codes or series that have been most affected?

Lieutenant General OTTIGNON. Thank you, Ranking Member Tillis. Sure, I have those numbers. If you want, I can submit them for the record or I can give them to you very quickly.

Senator TILLIS. Just real quick.

Lieutenant General OTTIGNON. We have separated 1,968 marines. Seventy-one percent of those were given a general discharge.

Twenty-eight percent were given an honorable discharge. That is total force between Active and Reserve. I don't have the exact number of—by Military Occupational Specialty (MOS) specialty. I can provide that for the record. But what I can tell you is, I watch that very closely. I can tell you there are no operational impacts across the force for readiness.

There is no one community that has signaled an inference where a leadership, an NCO, or a young, enlisted Marine is not present because of that. I think it is important to note that 97 percent of the force is vaccinated. The other part of the force that is not vaccinated, a large portion of that is in our enlisted training pipeline that is moving through the system. The Administration catches up behind it.

So I think it is just important to note that as we go through this process, we would want every Marine to get a vaccination. We think readiness is paramount. The Marine Corps is a 9-1-1 force as you charge us in law, and so it is important for us to recognize that health and safety, the Government's compelling interest here is so very high for readiness and for health and safety of the force, and these numbers—I wish every one of these young marines would have a vaccination.

As I mentioned to you before, the Commandant has offered an enlistment code for anyone that is discharged, the ability to return to service. If for some reason down the road here, they recognized that they would want to come back in, there is an opportunity for that Marine to do that.

Senator TILLIS. Thank you. General Brito.

Lieutenant General BRITO. Thank you. Thank you, Ranking Member Tillis. We have 345 soldiers that have been discharged today for refusal to get their mandatory vaccine. Of those 345 soldiers, 9 have received honorable discharges. The remaining 36 have received general and under honorable conditions. I would like to know, similar to my Marine counterpart, 98 percent of our force has been vaccinated.

We do continue to look strongly in conjunction with the Religious Freedom Act to ensure that no soldiers rights are being violated. As mentioned in the panel earlier today, look at the safety, health, and welfare of the unit, individual, and the operations that he or she may be supporting as well.

Senator TILLIS. Well, thank you, General. Has the Army also taken the position that the Marines have, that if a separated servicemember has buyer's remorse, wants to come back, that they are welcomed back?

Lieutenant General BRITO. We will certainly look at them, sir, within the context of the law to allow them to, through the legal process, look at the content—the contents of the discharge, but yes. I would like to note that a thorough, deliberative process is conducted with a soldier both in the staff and counseling before he or she does make that decision.

Senator TILLIS. Okay. Admiral Nowell.

Vice Admiral NOWELL. Sir, thank you. As of the 21st of April, the Navy has approved 798 separations based on COVID vaccine refusal. All of those, the characterization has been honorable. The way that we designed the process to get to a fully immunized force

as quickly and as equitably as possible really provided that path. But we, like the other services, believe that vaccination remains the most effective way to protect the force.

There have been no impacts to talent management. But I will tell you, as General Ottignon, General Brito have mentioned, we don't want to lose a single sailor to, you know, to this. So we continue to beat the drum on vaccinations, and we are pretty proud that about 99 percent of the Active component is vaccinated, sir.

Senator TILLIS. Thank you. Ms. DeFilippi.

Ms. DEFILIPPI. Thank you. Today, 287 airmen have separated from the Air Force. Of those, 281 have separated under general and under other honorable conditions, one entry level and five honorable. Like the other services, we are sitting at about 98 percent vaccination rate. The remaining servicemembers are going through the process of having their request for accommodation adjudicated.

The Air Force remains focused on ensuring that we are deployable at any point in time, and so we too are interested in making sure that those that separated solely for the reason of a vaccine are able to re-enlist if they are able to comply with their vaccination requirements. Thank you.

Senator TILLIS. Thank you. Ms. Mulcahy.

Ms. MULCAHY. Yes, thank you for that question, Ranking Member Tillis. We have not separated any guardians from the Space Force at this time. We too also enjoy a high 98.2 percent vaccination rate.

We, too, if we were to separate someone solely for the reasons of refusing the vaccine, would consider them if they would take it to come back into our ranks. I must also echo that this is absolutely a readiness issue, as well as it is just a health and safety issue as well.

Senator TILLIS. Thank you. General Brito, does it seem reasonable—it doesn't seem reasonable to me, I don't know, maybe for various reasons, reasonable for you that only two soldiers can meet the criteria for religious accommodation out of thousands of requests?

Lieutenant General BRITO. Senator Tillis, I would like to mention that we do have an extremely deliberate process to review both the medical and religious exemptions for COVID exemptions. For medical, again starts at the usual level, the field level, and all the way up to the chain of command.

Any exceptions are monitored through our Surgeon General. For our religious exemptions, the same again, a trained—a very deliberate process, starting with a unit level leadership all up to the highest level if necessary, for exemptions, and definitely in an adherence with the law of the Religious Freedoms Act as well.

Reasonable or not, I can say that we do have a very deliberate process to make sure the decision is equitable to the soldier in accordance with his or her rights and law, and in accordance with the health and safety of the unit and the unit that they support.

Senator TILLIS. Well, it is similar to a question from Senator Halley. It would be helpful if we could get just the guidelines or the rules that you go through to document that process. I think that would be helpful.

Lieutenant General BRITO. I certainly will, Senator.

Senator TILLIS. Ms. DeFilippi, of the airmen and guardians who were separated, how many were already in the process of separation or planning to retire?

Ms. DEFILIPPI. I will need to take that for the record and come back to you.

Senator TILLIS. I was curious just to see how much that is adjusted for that being the likely outcome for some number. I mean, but to a person, you are saying that the numbers are not one—that the reduction in numbers should not affect readiness, that the lack of vaccine could have an impact on readiness. Am I hearing that right from all of you, just head shake?

Ms. DEFILIPPI. Yes.

Senator TILLIS. Thank you. General Ottignon—I am sorry, I always flip the consonants. Can you talk a little bit about the Talent Management 2030? I know that the Force Design 2030 plan has gotten a lot of attention. You and I talked about a bit about this on our call yesterday, but could you talk a little bit about it? I am also curious whether or not you have the programs and authorities required to execute?

Lieutenant General OTTIGNON. Senator Tillis, thank you for that question. As I mentioned in my opening remarks, the Talent Management 2030 was in concert with the overall Force Design of 2030 that General Berger issued to the force.

It is unique in a sense that we recognize that in all domain, an ability to sense and make sense, an ability to operate forward, inside a weapon exclusion zone, have the ability to be a standing force, provide capabilities that the Marine Corps would need for the future fight, would have to look a little differently in the way we look and recruit and retain our talent.

That is really where the Commandant kind of moved out. It recognized three big pieces to this. That we knew we were going to have to build and retain the right force. We knew we were going to have to manage it differently.

We know that today's talent, today's Marines, we were trying to find—we are trying to find ways to create that ability to have the transparency and options available to Marines to manage their career so that their opportunities are present when they need them in order to return on the investment to us later in the enlistment.

Then finally, it really was a call to arms that we needed to inform and interface with our Marines, and it would require modernization of our IT systems. So it was pretty—it is a very comprehensive outlay of things that the Commandant has directed.

There are two or three things in there, I think, that are evolutionary or revolutionary in a sense, that are a different way to approach, that get a lot of attention. I think in the media. The Commandant has opined that we are going to have to look at how we mature the force. Where does that return on the investment occur?

Either is it upfront and enlistment or can I get more out of a young man or woman, because the amount of money and time that goes into the education and exquisite talents that we think we need? The other one was an opportunity to look at how do we go after, as the chairwoman remarked, about some of the all domain type of skill sets that we wanted.

Could lateral entry, for example, where a marine has the ability to move within the Marine Corps or an ability to come in and an opportunity to the service, where we recognize that the authorities already given to us by Congress, that allows us to assign that individual after they have gone through recruit training or officer—attending school, the opportunity to the level into the job, let's say into cyber, what have you.

This seems to have some momentum. We have internships with local universities. We have 18 students that will participate in cyber units within the Marine Corps, and we have 20 midshipmen from the Naval Academy that will spend their summer with us. So there is some growth in there.

All of these things to say, Senator, is that this program recognizes the need to raise our bar in order to meet the challenges of what we think is going to be a highly complex environment that we are going to have to fight in.

Senator TILLIS. Thank you. Ms. DeFilippi, the Air Force has undertaken several initiatives to improve the quality of your Exceptional Family Members Program. That is something that I have worked with on Senator Gillibrand for several years now on this Subcommittee. Can you describe the central assignments of the Air Force, what they are utilizing now?

Ms. DEFILIPPI. Thank you very much. We are very proud of the work that we have done to take what was a very—a very much a failing program and move it to one that is on the path to being successful and helpful to individuals.

What we have done over the past 18 months or so is to take the burden off the members, so whereas they had to do 90 percent of the work to ensure that their exceptional family members could be cared for, the Air Force, through our central cell now does most of the work related to ensuring that families are placed in positions—in assignments that can support their needs.

We have done that by using automation to ensure that family members can enter information one time and build on that instead of recreating the file each and every time. Also by co-locating the specialties that are required to make decisions about how appropriate assignments are for families in the same workspace so that they can collaborate with each other to get to the right outcome.

We would be happy to provide additional details if you so desire. Thank you.

Senator TILLIS. Thank you. I think that that is an area that is a good practice. It is something that we will continue to look at the other service lines to continue to build on that. But I do think it is a best practice that has a lot of potential to be replicated.

Ms. Mulcahy, you know, you recruit the servicemember and then you retain the family. Can you talk a little bit about what the— the Space Force is doing, particularly for military spouse employment and family support?

Ms. MULCAHY. Yes. Thank you so much, Senator Tillis, for that question. Two things that we are doing is, when it comes to our—all of the STEM positions that we have in the Space Force, in our civilian complement, we have quite a bit of direct hiring authority. What we do is communicate to our spouses that if they have their resumes in USA Job, when these positions come open because they

are a direct higher authority and we are in contact with our guardians, we will just push the opportunity to them.

This is a new program for us. It is probably just under 60 days now and we have already had two use—successful use cases with our small force. We are very excited about this and moving out further on it. On the other end, on more of the career end, with what we have learned over these last 2 years of being in COVID, we think that there is more opportunity to maximize certainly telework, but also remote assignments for folks and use of remote work.

We are very deliberately looking at what positions for a Guard—the military member, to be going between about seven different installations and where perhaps there are opportunities that the family member could stay in the position and work towards a career by working remotely.

So those are two parts of where we are very focused. We know that, again, we recruit a guardian, but we definitely retain the family, and so we are focused on anything and everything that we can do to help our great family members.

Senator TILLIS. I think not only in terms of doing right by those who are serving and their family members, but when we get this right, whether it is exceptional family members, making sure that we have employment opportunities for spouses, this develops a—and General Ottignon, it wasn't lost on me, what you were talking about with what you are doing with maybe extending assignments and reducing PCSs.

I mean, these are all things that can change what some people would conceive of when they enter into the armed services. More friendly, family friendly, more opportunities for occupations and careers for work members.

We are working on some of the—or following closely some of the work we are trying to do with State PACs to allow licensing and certifications moving across State lines more efficiently. All of those things I think are useful tools for the issue that I brought up in my opening comments. We have got headwinds in terms of recruiting. These are the sorts of things that can help make your jobs a lot easier.

When you are the last person in committee and the chair gives you the authority to call the committee, I mean, you could talk forever. I am sure the staff are hoping I don't talk anymore, but I really do appreciate you all being here.

But this process—committees are good, but I hope, and I think I speak for Senator Gillibrand, as we are moving through the NDAA process, as we are looking at more work that we can do, please be sure you are in touch with the committee staff and our officers so that we can do everything we can to make your job easier. Thank you all for being here. The committee is adjourned.

[Whereupon, at 4:32 p.m., the Subcommittee adjourned.]

[Questions for the record with answers supplied follow:]

## QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY SENATOR KIRSTEN E. GILLIBRAND

## END STRENGTH AND RECRUITING

All of the services report increasing difficulty in meeting recruiting targets, with the Army's end strength request coming in 12,000 less than last year. Traditionally, recruiting challenges are a function of the labor market and supply and demand. Increasing supply is not simply a function of increasing propensity to serve, though that is important. We must also increase the number of 17 to 24 year olds who are eligible to serve in today's military, while ensuring the force we recruit is the force we need over the next 20 to 30 years, with entrance standards appropriate to the times.

1. Senator GILLIBRAND. Lieutenant General Brito, Vice Admiral Nowell, Ms. DeFilippi, Lieutenant General Ottignon, Ms. Mulcahy, how do we expand eligibility for military service to recruit the force we need today, tomorrow, and 20 years from now, rather than force we needed decades ago?

Lieutenant General BRITO. Expanding eligibility for military service is essential to recruiting the force of today, tomorrow, and 20 years from now. Obesity, medical/physical concerns, and mental health concerns all stand as persistent challenges to expanding the pool of qualified military applicants. The Army is experimenting with a number of pilot programs and initiatives to increase propensity, maintain quality and help the Army bring in and retain the best talent. Recently, the Army has stood up a special Accessions/Recruiting Tiger Team to examine the challenges the Army faces and to develop innovative near- and long-term recommendations to meet recruiting goals and ensure the future success of the All-Volunteer Force.

Vice Admiral NOWELL. Navy fully supports working with the Office of Secretary of Defense and the other Services to explore expanding the eligibility standards of military service. We are dedicated to ensuring that all eligibility standards align with the current and future needs of the Navy and that all enlistees meet those standards morally, mentally, and physically.

Ms. DEFILIPPI. The DAF has several ongoing initiatives looking to expand the eligibility of those we recruit into the force to ensure we have the force needed today, tomorrow, and many years from now. In the immediate term, we are reviewing our policies to ensure they reflect current societal norms and our strength assessment during applicant processing at MEPS based on barrier analysis outcomes. This includes our policies on tattoos, hair, and appearance. Another initiative in support of growing our Cyber force is establishing a presence at summer youth camps and programs to foster excitement about coding among tomorrow's airmen. Being present at programs at the Middle School levels, is enhancing awareness of military career opportunities and inspiring youth at an earlier point in a student's career.

Lieutenant General OTTIGNON. Recruiting has been more challenging over the last 2 years than perhaps at any time since the creation of the All-Volunteer Force. This is due to many factors. COVID-19 impacted recruiting efforts due to social distancing requirements, limited capacity at our recruit depots, delayed shipping activities, closed schools, and canceled community events that we depend on for personal contacts and outreach. In addition, the growing disconnect and declining favorable view between the U.S. population and traditional institutions, labor shortages, high inflation, and a population of youth who do not see the value of military service also continue to strain recruiting efforts and place the Marine Corps' accession mission at risk. Only a small percentage of our Nation's youth are eligible to serve in the first place; many are not eligible due to legal and medical disqualifiers. To continue to make our recruiting mission, we must continue to fund recruiting advertising, as well as special pays and incentives for enlistment. We must also give the Services the same modern tools used by private industry to reach out and find potential recruits who may be interested in service. We in the public eye must also continue to highlight the virtues and importance of military service to our Nation. We cannot—and will not—lower our standards in order to make mission.

Ms. MULCAHY. The DAF has several ongoing initiatives looking to expand the eligibility of those we recruit into the force to ensure we have the force needed today, tomorrow, and many years from now. In the immediate term, we are reviewing our policies to ensure they reflect current societal norms and our strength assessment during applicant processing at Military Enlisted Processing Station (MEPS) based on barrier analysis outcomes. This includes our policies on tattoos, hair, and appearance. Another initiative in support of growing our Cyber force is establishing a presence at summer youth camps and programs to foster excitement about coding among tomorrow's airmen and guardians. Being present at programs at the Middle School levels, is enhancing awareness of military career opportunities and inspiring youth at an earlier point in a student's career.



2. Senator GILLIBRAND. Lieutenant General Brito, Vice Admiral Nowell, Ms. DeFilippi, Lieutenant General Ottignon, Ms. Mulcahy, should we rely more on non-cognitive predictive assessments, including the military's own Tailored Adaptive Personality Assessment System (TAPAS), and less on traditional cognitive testing methods such as the Armed Services Vocational Aptitude Battery (ASVAB)?

Lieutenant General BRITO. The Armed Services Vocational Aptitude Battery, or the ASVAB, remains a reliable assessment for determining an individual's suitability for military service. Assessments like the Tailored Adaptive Personality Assessment System, or TAPAS, augment and compliment the Army's current testing processes by identifying the traits that position an individual for success as a Soldier. We support the continued use of both tests; as it enables the Army to identify quality recruits who will succeed as soldiers.

Vice Admiral NOWELL. The Tailored Adaptive Personality Assessment System (TAPAS) is a non-cognitive assessment test developed for use in the selection and classification of military recruits in conjunction with the cognitive ASVAB test. While it is expected that TAPAS will provide improvements in selection and classification when used in conjunction with the cognitive ASVAB, Navy is still evaluating the validity of TAPAS. If proven, TAPAS would be used along with the ASVAB to provide the Navy with an improved ability to predict each sailor's future success.

Ms. DEFILIPPI. The Air Force has found that pairing both tools together along with the recruiter's assessment allows for a more comprehensive review of the whole person. Currently, TAPAS and Predictive Success Models are not in use for all Air Force Specialty Codes (AFSC), but we are working to expand these assessments into more AFSCs in order to provide a better data capture to guide changes.

Lieutenant General OTTIGNON. There is a growing body of research that shows that non-cognitive information drawn from predictive assessments (e.g., TAPAS, interest-matching, etc.) has the potential to add to the value of a cognitive test such as the ASVAB. The Marine Corps is exploring the use of these non-cognitive assessments. For example, the Marine Corps is conducting analysis and evaluating TAPAS's utility for accession and classification decisions. The ASVAB is used not only for accession criteria but also as a predictor of success within a Marine's Primary Military Occupational Specialty (PMOS). TAPAS, or another instrument capable of measuring non-cognitive and affective factors, may provide utility for us in the future to open the aperture to a larger pool of applicants for specific PMOSs beyond what the ASVAB can do.

We are also looking to collect and utilize non-cognitive information from an applicant's interest profile. Using an interest-matching tool, we can determine which PMOSs within the Marine Corps align best with an applicant's interests. The Marine Corps is developing a tool, similar to a Navy tool, which helps align an applicant's interest to a PMOS within the Marine Corps. This tool is anticipated to help with both recruitment and retention and should be ready to pilot in the near future.

We are also reviewing the feasibility and applicability of elements of the ASVAB that we do not currently use. For example, there are tests designed to measure fluid intelligence, spatial ability, working memory, perceptual speed, as well as complex reasoning that can be added or that are currently in development.

The overall goal of all of our efforts is to better assess talent along the continuum from recruitment to retirement, using attributes that can be measured, tracked, developed, trained, and analyzed.

Ms. MULCAHY. The Space Force has found that pairing both tools together along with the recruiter's assessment allows for a more comprehensive review of the whole person. Currently, TAPAS and Predictive Success Models are not in use for all Air Force Specialty Codes (AFSC), but we are working to expand these assessments into more AFSCs in order to provide a better data capture to guide changes.

3. Senator GILLIBRAND. Lieutenant General Brito, Vice Admiral Nowell, Ms. DeFilippi, Lieutenant General Ottignon, Ms. Mulcahy, how do we address the shrinking geographic diversity of the force—which in my view is partly responsible for the recruiting challenges the services face today.

Lieutenant General BRITO. Shrinking geographic diversity is a challenge to recruiting that influences public awareness and perceptions of the Army and the propensity to serve. To address this challenge, we are distributing our recruiting force geographically with consideration to female recruiter distribution, language skills, and location demographics in areas we are looking to expand. By establishing a greater presence across a wider geographic area, the Army will build greater awareness and ensure the force remains representative of the population at large.

Vice Admiral NOWELL. Navy's robust Marketing & Advertising (M&A) strategy includes a national M&A campaign, Forged by the Sea, which reaches the target de-

mographic and generates leads from all zip codes. Digital media focused, the strategy relies heavily on digital and social media, virtual tools, and online events to communicate to the market. Additionally, Navy established E-Talent teams to focus on digital prospecting and lead efficiency management. Navy continues to explore new virtual platforms to connect with potential recruits.

About the Forged by the Sea campaign:

- Digital media overcomes geographic boundaries and helps reach both rural and urban audiences.
- The decision to forego broadcast advertising and focus solely on digital media was based on the target market's media consumption habits.
- The shift to all digital paid media allows Navy to measure, optimize and attribute 100 percent of the M&A investment, focusing on channels/content that offers the highest return and value.
- Navy Content is available via most social media platforms (YouTube, Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, Snapchat, and Reddit) and Navy.com. The content authentically represent diverse lifestyles and cultures within Navy (inclusive of racial, ethnic, religious and gender diversity) to ensure relevance and dispel myths, combat prejudice and bias.

In order to reach potential applicants via more conventional methods, Navy continues to occupy more than 900 recruiting stations; deliver school presentations; conduct Navy Promotional Days, Fleet Weeks, and Navy Weeks; and send direct mail, emails, phone calls, and text messages. The location of Navy Recruiting stations is based on regular in-depth market analysis that explores population density, education quality, labor market trends, and historical propensity.

Ms. DEFILIPPI. In order to account for geographic diversity, the Air Force Recruiting Service (AFRS) tracks enlistees' zip codes. The AFRS is using this information along with joint military advertising, market research, and additional studies to identify areas in which to increase an Air Force recruiting presence. While we have seen a marked increase in diversity of recruits this fiscal year for the USAF and initial recruits for the USSF, AFRS will continue to expand outreach and advertisements efforts to attract a diverse talent pool.

Lieutenant General OTTIGNON. The Marine Corps is already a diverse service, and we are always looking to find the best talent in our Nation from everywhere in our Nation. We have recruiters assigned to every zip code in the U.S. —from the most urban to most rural in order to take advantage and grow geographic diversity. The demographic makeup of our recruiting force is even more diverse, which is a testament to our efforts to recruit a more diverse force by connecting Marines with the communities they represent. We support a whole of government approach to message influencers and increase access to youth about military service in order to further expand the market. Directed Department of Education support to make contact information available, funding of the Joint Advertising Market Research and Studies (JAMRS) program for strategic community engagement campaigns, direct ASVAB testing, expanding our ability to market to prospective recruits, and incentives for schools/states for students selecting military service, will have positive impacts on recruiting across the joint force.

Ms. MULCAHY. Recruiting efforts in the Space Force are coordinated through the Air Force Recruiting Service (AFRS). In order to account for geographic diversity, the AFRS tracks enlistees' zip codes. The AFRS is using this information along with joint military advertising, market research, and additional studies to identify areas in which to increase an Air and Space Force recruiting presence. While we have seen a marked increase in diversity of recruits this Fiscal Year for the USAF and initial recruits for the USSF, AFRS will continue to expand outreach and advertisements efforts to attract a diverse talent pool.

#### SUICIDE PREVENTION

Last month, this Subcommittee held a hearing on suicide prevention in the armed forces. In addition to hearing from the Department directly on its efforts to prevent suicide among servicemembers, we also heard from outside organizations and a parent whose son, a staff sergeant in the Army, tragically died by suicide. We also received many helpful suggestions for the Department to improve its efforts in suicide prevention. Chief among these suggestions was addressing the root causes of suicidal behavior, including relationship stress, and limiting access to lethal means.

4. Senator GILLIBRAND. Vice Admiral Nowell, just last week, we received disturbing reports that there were three suicides in the previous nine days of sailors assigned to the USS George Washington, and that two of the three involved fire-

arms. What is the Navy doing to ensure that access to lethal means is limited for those experiencing suicidal distress?

Vice Admiral NOWELL. Navy policy provides commanders and health professional's guidance on reducing access to lethal means through the voluntary storage of privately owned firearms. Commanding officers and health professionals may inquire about, collect and record information about a servicemember's privately owned firearms, ammunition or other weapons if the commanding officer or health professional has reasonable grounds to believe the servicemember is at risk for suicide or causing harm to others. Sailors may voluntarily surrender their privately owned firearm for safe storage during times of stress.

5. Senator GILLIBRAND. Lieutenant General Brito, Vice Admiral Nowell, Ms. DeFilippi, Lieutenant General Ottignon, Ms. Mulcahy, what are your services doing to improve suicide prevention, and how are you coordinating with each other to insure you are learning best practices in suicide prevention?

Lieutenant General BRITO. The Army is committed to finding solutions aimed at tackling suicide through its prevention programs. We are implementing a public health approach focused on new, comprehensive and integrated policies. Gen Joseph M. Martin, Vice Chief of Staff of the Army, led a chain teach initiative to all senior commanders on 29 Nov 2021. He directed them to implement the chain teach within their commands down to the most junior soldier in teams and squads to ensure consistent implementation of the Army Suicide Program across the force. The training includes information on how to recognize signs of individuals struggling with their mental health, knowledge of available help-seeking resources, and ensuring Soldiers feel connected and know they matter. In addition, the Army developed unit and senior commander handbooks to serve as guides for implementation of the Suicide Prevention program. The Army is enhancing suicide prevention training across all components, and expanding telehealth/behavioral health care. We're also incorporating financial literacy into professional military education for all ranks and offering the Financial Readiness Program to all Soldiers. Army efforts such as Military and Family Life Counselors provided through DOD Military Community and Family Policy, Marriage retreats and services offered by Army Community Service are geared towards helping Soldiers cultivate healthy relationships, while efforts such as the Army Sponsorship Program, Single Soldier Retreats, and Better Opportunities for Single Soldiers program help address well-being and morale issues of single and unaccompanied Soldiers. These programs are geared to help Soldiers, civilians, and Family members better cope with life stressors. We coordinate with our sister Services through the Department of Defense Suicide Prevention Office monthly working group, and quarterly Suicide Prevention General Officer Steering Committee. In addition, we share best practices/lessons learned during the Deputy's Workforce Council.

Vice Admiral NOWELL. Navy's suicide prevention efforts aim to encourage positive help-seeking behaviors, eliminate stigma, and increase visibility and access to critical resources. Navy monitors suicide-related data to identify emerging trends and inform targeted prevention strategies. Initiatives include:

- Cultural Champion Network (an interdisciplinary network at each command designed to create an integrated support system).
- Expanded Operational Stress Control (leverages Command Resiliency Teams and deckplate leadership to provide more accessible, collaborative resources and real-time assessments of unit culture to promote healthy command climates and mitigate risks).
- Lethal Means Safety Plan (gun lock distribution, voluntary storage during times of stress, securing firearms at home messaging).
- Training, Education and Awareness (preparing sailors to navigate stress and choose life successfully).
- Piloting "Get Better Together" through the Chaplains Religious Enrichment Development Operation, a relationship enrichment retreat designed to equip Navy Service Members and their romantic partners with strategies to adaptively manage stressors and serving as a primary prevention intervention for psychological distress related to suicide risk, alcohol and substance abuse, and intimate partner violence.

There are multiple opportunities for the Services to collaborate with the Defense Suicide Prevention Office. Two options are outlined within policy with mandatory participation. This includes the Suicide Prevention General Officer Steering Committee (SPGOSC) and the Suicide Prevention and Risk Reduction Committee (SPARRC). The SPGOSC, composed of senior executive leaders and general/flag officers from across the Department, leads the Department's suicide prevention efforts. This governance body addresses present and future suicide prevention needs by em-

ploying data-driven, evidence-informed practices that have DOD-wide applicability. Complementing the SPGOSC, the SPARRC is an action-officer level committee responsible for the coordinated implementation of the guidance provided by the SPGOSC. In addition, the SPARRC offers an opportunity for collaboration, communication, and documentation of promising suicide prevention practices across DOD.

Collaboration across the Department also includes specialty working groups created through the SPGOSC that ensure collaboration across specific topics such as program evaluation, lethal means safety, stigmatizing language, or barriers to care.

Ms. DEFILIPPI. Suicide prevention is a DAF top priority and we must do more to stop the tragic loss of airmen and guardians to this preventable manner of death. The DAF sets annual "Prevention Priorities" to address program gaps and foster innovation. Annual prevention priorities have become a continuous quality improvement function of the DAF suicide prevention strategic approach and have yielded tangible program enhancements.

In addition to the prevention priorities, the DAF leverages partnerships with academia and industry to design, implement, and evaluate prevention innovations in an ongoing basis. The Community Action Team and Community Action Board comprise the action arm of the prevention system and are used to elevate prevention best practices from the installation, MAJCOM and HAF levels allowing us to learn from innovators within our community. Examples of our current partnerships include our Wingman Connect program with the University of Rochester, Airman's Edge with Ohio State University, and our Virtual Reality Suicide Prevention Training with Florida State University and industry partner Moth & Flame. The DAF actively recruits partners and works with the Military Suicide Research Consortium for program funding. Beginning in FY23, our new internal prevention research funding will allow us to expand partnerships even further.

Finally, the DAF uses the DOD's Suicide Prevention and Risk Reduction Committee and Suicide Prevention General Officer Steering Committee to coordinate efforts with other Services and the Defense Suicide Prevention Office. Through these forums, the DAF has shared several of our promising prevention programs and learned from others to improve and coordinate suicide prevention efforts.

Lieutenant General OTTIGNON. Suicide is an enterprise-wide concern that has lasting harmful effects on Marines, families, and the Marine Corps. We coordinate with DoD and the other Services daily. We regularly engage with Navy mental health services to increase access to care and seamless transitions between services.

Because leadership involvement is critical to preventing crisis, suicide prevention is a commander's program in the Marine Corps. Every leader focuses on building connections with their Marines in order to recognize signs of distress. They promote an environment in which mental wellness is prioritized and utilizing medical providers, counselors, chaplains, and other health and wellness resources is encouraged.

The Marine Corps' Death by Suicide Review Board continues to identify key themes and provide actionable information. For example, we know more than sixty percent of recent deaths by suicide among Marines involved firearms, so we are focused on lethal means safety initiatives. We have also learned that relationship distress is consistently the most common stressor present among those Marines who have died by suicide. As a result, primary prevention efforts have increased the focus on healthy relationship development at entry level training and throughout the lifecycle of a Marine's career.

The importance of force preservation and resiliency cannot be overstated for a ready Marine Corps. The Marine Corps Force Preservation process is the formalized method used by commanders to identify individual Marine risk factors and apply holistic risk management measures to improve individual and unit readiness. Every day, this process assists leaders across the Corps to identify those in need. To further improve and modernize force preservation, we have developed a secure application-based tool that will provide commanders a single, standardized platform to enable proactive identification and assessment of individual Marine risk and resiliency factors. With the implementation of our Command Individual Risk Assessment System (CIRRAS), this data is transferable between commands so that, as Marines PCS, gaining commands will have a clear picture of the Marines at risk for harmful behaviors or negative outcomes, allowing for proactive support from the command.

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#### ARMY COMBAT FITNESS TEST

The Army recently approved the Army Combat Fitness Test, a new baseline fitness assessment for soldiers. The test was re-tooled after a RAND study recommended gender and age-norming the test to make it a fair and accurate assessment of baseline fitness for all soldiers. But some questions about the impact of the ACFT remain.

6. Senator GILLIBRAND. Lieutenant General Brito, can you tell us what steps the Army is taking to ensure that Reserve and National Guard personnel have appropriate coaching and equipment access to train for this physical assessment?

Lieutenant General BRITO. The Army equipped units with \$78 million worth of ACFT equipment, with over 60 percent distributed to the Reserve component to address their geographically dispersed footprints. This equipment is available for Physical Readiness Training during drill weekends and to help Soldiers familiarize with the test.

Reserve Component Soldiers looking for ACFT equipment to test or train on may also coordinate with their local recruiting station (1,400) or ROTC program (298) across the country, who have also been issued ACFT equipment.

Further, equipment is not required for training for the ACFT. We released an ACFT training guide with exercises to help Soldiers successfully prepare for the test anytime, anywhere. The publication provides recommended training schedules for all phases of unit training cycles, to include the Reserve component and remotely located Soldiers. We made additional resources available on the ACFT microsite, and the ACFT YouTube page has videos of exercises to help prepare for the ACFT.

We will continue to assess the ACFT through the governance body and provide any recommended future modifications to Army senior leaders.

7. Senator GILLIBRAND. Lieutenant General Brito, what is the Army doing to ensure that Guard and Reserve members can safely and correctly train for the assessment when they do not live near a Guard or Reserve facility?

Lieutenant General BRITO. While there are some inherent challenges for Reserve Component Soldiers, specifically being geographically dispersed across the country, I assure you we are committed to providing the proper resources for all Soldiers, regardless of component, to succeed on the ACFT.

We are incorporating the ACFT in a deliberate, time-phased manner to ensure all Soldiers can properly train and adjust to the new events and scoring scales. While Active Duty Soldiers will begin taking the test for record starting October 1, 2022, record scores for National Guard and Army Reserve Soldiers commence in April 2023, giving Reserve Component Soldiers a full year to train for the revised test before any personnel actions are implemented.

We released an ACFT training guide with exercises to help Soldiers successfully prepare for the test anytime, anywhere. The publication provides recommended training schedules for all phases of unit training cycles, to include the Reserve component and remotely located soldiers. We made additional resources available on the ACFT microsite, and the ACFT YouTube page has videos of exercises to help prepare for the ACFT, many of which require no equipment.

We will continue to assess the ACFT through the governance body and provide any recommended future modifications to Army senior leaders.

8. Senator GILLIBRAND. Lieutenant General Brito, how do you plan to track and measure the effects of this test on recruiting and retention, particularly in critical skill specialties, such as medical personnel?

Lieutenant General BRITO. The Army has embedded the ACFT within the Army People Strategy governance body to continue to review test data, monitor impacts, and deliver an assessment to the Secretary of the Army in April 2023. In addition, RAND will conduct two follow on studies to assist the governance body by providing: (1) an analysis on ACFT implementation and policy evaluation; and (2) the relationship between ACFT and health/injuries.

The Army's intent has always been that full implementation of the ACFT will not adversely or disproportionately affect any Soldier or group. By implementing an age and gender performance-normed scoring scale, while pursuing a time-phased implementation that allows additional time to train, we expect similar recruiting and retention outcomes as the previous APFT. All direct commissioned officers, including judge advocates, chaplains, and medical officers, are not required to pass a record ACFT until 6 months after reaching their first unit of assignment. No potentially adverse administrative actions, including flags, will be taken on these Soldiers until that time.

#### TRANSGENDER POLICY

On March 31, 2021, the Department of Defense reinstated a policy that prohibits discrimination on the basis of gender identity or an individual's identification as transgender. This policy allows for the recruitment, retention, and care of all qualified transgender individuals. Under this policy, transgender servicemembers who meet military requirements can serve openly in the military. Recently, several States have passed laws discriminating against transgender individuals.

9. Senator GILLIBRAND. Lieutenant General Brito, Vice Admiral Nowell, Ms. DeFilippi, Lieutenant General Ottignon, Ms. Mulcahy, how does your Service deal with assignment of transgender servicemembers to States with laws that discriminate against transgender individuals?

Lieutenant General BRITO. Assignment of transgender servicemembers is no different than assignment of non-transgender servicemembers. If a Soldier experiences hardship, they can request a reassignment, curtailment or deletion based on compassionate reasons through their chain of command. This includes circumstances when a Servicemember or Family member faces discrimination based on race, color, religion, sex (including pregnancy, gender identity, and sexual orientation), and national origin.

Vice Admiral NOWELL. A sailor's desired location is one of many considerations when filling billets, but ultimately fleet readiness requirements are the guiding factor.

Ms. DEFILIPPI. Members are required to execute PCS orders unless they've been approved for a humanitarian assignment to support unique circumstances (e.g., a terminally ill family member) or if the location cannot adequately support family member(s) enrolled in the Exceptional Family Member Program (EFMP).

Members are eligible to enroll in the EFMP if they have a family member who has a diagnosed condition that requires ongoing specialized medical or educational services. The EFMP identifies family members with special medical and education needs, enrolls sponsors and family members in the program and participates in coordination of assignments for Active Duty servicemembers with consideration of the special needs of family members during the assignment process.

The EFMP ensures that servicemembers are assigned to locations that can support the needs of their exceptional family member.

To date, the DAF has not received any assignment-specific requests based on state laws impacting transgender individuals. We remain attentive to the needs of all of our members and families. Servicemembers who have concerns about themselves or their family members have a variety of resources and should work through command channels and their local helping agencies who can address their specific concerns.

Lieutenant General OTTIGNON. For privacy reasons, the Marine Corps does not track Marines who are transgender, nor any transgender family members. Therefore, the assignment of transgender servicemembers is no different than non-transgender servicemembers. No limits are placed on a transgender Marine's assignment, solely on the basis of their gender identity. However, if any Marine feels that their assignment is problematic in any way, they can work with their chain of command, the Headquarters Marine Corps assignment and policy branches, and the Service Central Coordination Cell to evaluate the issue and arrive at a solution that balances the best interests of the Marine and the Marine Corps.

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10. Senator GILLIBRAND. Lieutenant General Brito, Vice Admiral Nowell, Ms. DeFilippi, Lieutenant General Ottignon, Ms. Mulcahy, does your military department limit, in any way, assignment of transgender military personnel, or military personnel with transgender family members, to any state that has passed a law that discriminates against individuals who identify as transgender?

Lieutenant General BRITO. The Army does not limit in any way, assignment of transgender personnel, or military personnel with transgender family members to any state. When extenuating circumstances exist and are not expected to be resolved in one year, Servicemembers may be granted a compassionate reassignment if they are experiencing hardship. This includes circumstances when a Servicemember or family member faces discrimination based on race, color, religion, sex (including pregnancy, gender identity, and sexual orientation), and national origin.

Vice Admiral NOWELL. A sailor's desired location is one of many considerations when filling billets, but ultimately fleet readiness requirements are the guiding factor.

Ms. DEFILIPPI. No, the assignment process policy applies equally to all airmen and guardians. Servicemembers who have concerns about themselves or their family members have a variety of resources, and should work through command channels and their local helping agencies who can address their specific concerns.

Lieutenant General OTTIGNON. For privacy reasons, the Marine Corps does not track Marines who are transgender, nor any transgender family members. Therefore, the assignment of transgender servicemembers is no different than non-transgender servicemembers. No limits are placed on a transgender Marine's assignment, solely on the basis of their gender identity. However, if any Marine feels that their assignment is problematic in any way, they can work with their chain of command, the Headquarters Marine Corps assignment and policy branches, and the Service Central Coordination Cell to evaluate the issue and arrive at a solution that balances the best interests of the Marine and the Marine Corps.

Ms. MULCAHY. No, the assignment process policy applies equally to all airmen and guardians. Servicemembers who have concerns about themselves or their family members have a variety of resources, and should work through command channels and their local helping agencies who can address their specific concerns.

#### NEW ARMY PARENTAL POLICY

Just last week, the Army unveiled an expansive set of new policies aimed to create one of the most consequential sets of quality-of-life improvements ever for military parents, including expanded leave and making it easier for pregnant soldiers to continue their careers. This new policy includes a 12-month exemption from onerous military requirements such as postpartum body composition, physical fitness testing, postpartum dress uniforms, deferment from training and deployments, among other things. This new policy also authorizes up to 42 days of convalescent leave after a pregnancy loss and authorizes parental leave for birthparents in the Army Reserve and Army National Guard.

11. Senator GILLIBRAND. Vice Admiral Nowell, Ms. DeFilippi, Lieutenant General Ottignon, Ms. Mulcahy, please describe your services parental policies.

Vice Admiral NOWELL. With regard to leave for new parents on Active Duty, Navy offers six weeks of maternity convalescent leave to a new mother. Additionally, one parent will be designated as the primary caregiver and will receive six weeks of pri-

mary caregiver leave. The other parent, designated as the secondary caregiver, will receive three weeks of secondary caregiver leave.

Navy does not have prescribed lengths of convalescent leave for members that have a pregnancy loss. The length of convalescent leave is determined by medical personnel on a case by case basis. Military treatment providers may refer to the Defense Health Agency Tri-Service Practice Algorithm on Convalescent Leave following Perinatal Loss to determine medical recommendation for length of convalescent leave with pregnancy duration and confirmed gestational weeks at time of loss to inform their patient-specific decision, but are not required to adhere strictly to that resource.

For drilling reservists, Navy worked with the Office of the Secretary of Defense (OSD) on the development of Department of Defense guidance for the implementation of maternity leave for drilling reservists. We anticipate that formal OSD guidance will be published shortly and Navy will implement that guidance.

Pregnancy and parenthood are natural events that occur in servicemembers' lives and are compatible with successful naval service. The OPNAVINST 6000.1D, Navy Guidelines Concerning Pregnancy and Parenthood Instruction (March 2018), applies to all Active Duty and full-time support Navy personnel, commands and activities, and describes the Navy's pregnancy and parenthood guidelines and requirements.

With regard to operational deferment, a Navy servicemember who physically gives birth will be deferred from all transfers (e.g., permanent change of station, temporary additional duty, temporary duty) to operational assignments for a period of 12 months following delivery. This is to support breastfeeding and bonding. Sailors have the option to request an operational deferment waiver to terminate their 12 month postpartum operational deferment tour at any point after convalescent leave in order to return to an operational command. These requests must be initiated by the servicemember, and approved by the health care provider and the commanding officer, in coordination with the cognizant detailer.

In July 2021, Navy updated the pregnant and postpartum physical readiness exemption policy, expanding the postpartum exemption timeframe from its' previous nine month guidance to 12 months after a qualifying birth event. Servicemembers are exempt from the official Physical Fitness Assessment, which consists of the Body Composition Assessment and the Physical Readiness Test, for 12 months after the conclusion of pregnancy. At six to nine months postpartum, the servicemember participates in a wellness (unofficial) Physical Fitness Assessment, if cleared by their Health Care Provider.

Regarding maternity uniforms, Navy offers enrollment in the Maternity Pilot Program to Active Duty and Reserve officers and enlisted to obtain a full set of required maternity uniform items at no cost to Servicemember. Issued maternity uniforms may be worn throughout the period of required wear up to 12 months after receipt.

Ms. DEFILIPPI. Similar to the Army, the DAF policy contains numerous provisions aimed to improve quality of life for airmen and guardians as servicemembers and parents. These include authorizing permissive Temporary Duty travel (TDY) for fertility treatments and non-chargeable convalescent leave following the loss of a child. Additionally, pregnant airmen and guardians receive physical fitness testing exemptions for 12 months following the conclusion of a pregnancy. In terms of military travel and contingency requirements, DAF allows for deferments on deployments, Permanent Changes of Station (PCS), and Temporary Duty (TDY) travel for both post-partum members (12 months) and adoptive parents (6 months).

Lieutenant General OTTIGNON. No Marine should have to choose between service and having a family. Early on, our Commandant made increasing parental leave a priority. As it stands today, according to current law and policy, a Marine who is the primary caregiver can take as much as 20 weeks of paid leave by taking advantage of multiple convalescence and other paid leave authorities, and can do so in flexible increments. We also recently increased secondary caregiver leave from 2 weeks to 3 weeks. With other leave authorities, a secondary caregiver is currently authorized up to 11 weeks of paid leave following the birth of a child. Additionally, we are working with the Department on the recent parental leave expansion authorities in the Fiscal Year 2022 NDAA.

In regard to assignments, to the extent possible, assignments and PCS orders will accommodate pregnant Marines. Marines will not be assigned duties that adversely affect their health or unborn child health. In regard to deployment, the Marine Corps allows, but does not require, birthparents to defer operational deployments, overseas assignments, or any temporary duty away from home station for up to 12 months after the birth or adoption of a child. Finally, in regard to physical training, a Marine birthparent is exempt from physical fitness and body composition standards until at least 12 months after the date of the birth event.



Ms. MULCAHY. Similar to the Army, the DAF policy contains numerous provisions aimed to improve quality of life for airmen and guardians as servicemembers and parents. These include authorizing permissive Temporary Duty travel (TDY) for fertility treatments and non-chargeable convalescent leave to recover following delivery of a child or a stillbirth. Additionally, pregnant airmen and guardians receive physical fitness testing exemptions for 12 months following the conclusion of a pregnancy. In terms of military travel and contingency requirements, DAF allows for deferments on deployments, Permanent Changes of Station (PCS), and Temporary Duty (TDY) travel for both post-partum members (12 months) and adoptive parents (6 months).

12. Senator GILLIBRAND. Vice Admiral Nowell, Ms. DeFilippi, Lieutenant General Ottignon, Ms. Mulcahy, what is your view of this new Army policy, and will you consider adopting a similar policy for your Service?

Vice Admiral NOWELL. Navy already has a policy that governs Pregnancy and Parenthood guidelines and requirements for our servicemembers and applies to all Active Duty and full-time support Navy personnel, commands and activities. We update our instruction based on policy revisions from the Secretary of the Navy and Office of the Secretary of Defense (OSD).

Navy will implement the new parental leave and the reserve maternity leave when the DOD guidance is released. Our leave program will conform to the policy that OSD directs.

Ms. DEFILIPPI. The Department of the Air Force is actively reviewing multiple policies to see where we can adopt similar provisions to better support our airmen, guardians, and families.

Lieutenant General OTTIGNON. Marine Corps and Army parental policies are largely uniform. We welcome new ideas that allow our Marines to better support their families while maintaining our mission readiness. Some of the new Army policies, such as excusing birthparents from all continuous duty events that are in excess of one normal duty day/shift for 365 days after the birth of their child, will require further evaluation. We are working with the Department on the recent parental leave expansion authorities in the Fiscal Year 2022 NDAA.

Ms. MULCAHY. The Department of the Air Force is actively reviewing multiple policies to see where we can adopt similar provisions to better support our airmen, guardians, and families.

#### MENTAL HEALTH

As most everyone here acknowledges, our country is in the midst of a mental health crisis. Last October, the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP), the American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry (AACAP) and the Children's Hospital Association (CHA) declared a mental health emergency for children and adolescents. There is already a mental and behavioral health provider shortage in the Military Health System (MHS) documented in a January 2022 DOD report on behavioral health requirements. Yet the services are seeking reductions in reimbursements to mental and behavioral health providers and have proposed medical billet cuts.

13. Senator GILLIBRAND. Lieutenant General Brito, Vice Admiral Nowell, Ms. DeFilippi, Lieutenant General Ottignon, how has mental health care been factored into the decision-making related to the medical billet cuts? Won't removing mental health providers, as well as primary care providers who help screen patients and are part of the continuum of care, take away options and jeopardize the availability of mental health services for servicemembers and their dependents?

Lieutenant General BRITO. The Army does not currently plan to reduce or cut the number of existing Behavioral Health provider billets as part of any reduction of medical forces. The Army manpower process includes iterative assessments of capabilities and capacity, Army leaders had a low tolerance for mission impacts in Health Care Delivery (HCD) and decided to reduce currently vacant military authorizations filled with civilian over-hires, or assessed with a high confidence to hire Civilian Personnel in that health care market. The refined impact assessment demonstrated that most of the reductions would cause no impact to medical readiness or beneficiary care because the locations are over structured or the military position is vacant and a civilian is already in place. The Army did not recommend any reductions that would cause Military Treatment Facility care to be transferred to the network or any reductions where it assessed difficulty in hiring a civilian replacement in that area.

Vice Admiral NOWELL. Navy is committed to ensuring that our sailors and marines and their families have access to the mental health support they need. We

have established layers of forward leaning defense for mental health in addition to the providers at the Medical Treatment Facilities (MTFs), including Expanded Combat Stress Control, Warrior Toughness, and when needed, intervention by Special Psychiatric Rapid Intervention Navy Teams (SPRINT) and Organizational Incident Nexus (ORION) Trauma Tracking program. Other important non-medical mental health resources include Fleet and Family Support Center counselors, Military and Family Life Counselors Chaplains, Deployed Resiliency Counselors, and Military One Source Counseling Services.

Regarding medical manpower divestitures, we are continuing engagement with the Defense Health Agency to develop a mitigation plan for divestitures to include impact on military medical treatment facilities on Navy and Marine Corps installations. Work also continues to finalize analyses of the Joint Medical Estimate, operational medical requirements, and the enduring homeland defense mission and pandemic responses. These analyses may alter the specialty mix of the divestitures in order to meet operational/training/readiness requirements.

Ms. DEFILIPPI. The DAF specifically removed mental health positions from consideration for reductions. We are not expecting any mental health provider reductions as part of the 4,684 military personnel billet cuts.

Standardized provider-to-patient empanelment ratios (for Servicemembers and their families) will be maintained despite the reductions in Active Duty primary care providers within the 4,684 military personnel reduction plan. Primary care empanelment will still occur with Active Duty providers, but may shift to civilian and contractor military treatment facility providers, as well as network primary care providers. Primary care providers will continue to provide initial mental health assessments and provide a continuum of care.

Lieutenant General OTIGNON. Access to mental and behavioral health providers is vital to the care of our Marines. Encouraging Marines to seek help when needed is a continuous effort that requires proactive engagement from leadership at all levels. The Marine Corps regularly collaborates with Navy mental health services to increase access to care and seamless transitions between services. While the Marine Corps defers to the Navy on medical requirements and resources, we are deeply concerned with ensuring our mental health services meet the needs of the force. We continue to increase our focus on prevention and resilience. The Marine Corps makes non-medical counseling services available to Marines to complement medical mental health services.

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#### QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY SENATOR ELIZABETH WARREN

##### EXCEPTIONAL FAMILY MEMBER PROGRAM

In recent years, military families participating in the Exceptional Family Members Program have encountered numerous systemic challenges, including the widely-criticized changes to the Autism Cares Demonstration program and TRICARE coverage, which has limited settings in which children with autism spectrum disorder can receive important treatment.

Last summer, Deputy Secretary Dr. Hicks testified on the findings and recommendations of the Independent Review Commission on Sexual Assault in the Military. Dr. Hicks highlighted the benefits of bringing in outside experts, adopting an evidence-based approach, and engaging stakeholders as a best practice approach. These families would benefit from applying what Dr. Hicks called a best practice approach, a sprint to deliver change fast.

14. Senator WARREN. Secretary Cisneros, Lieutenant General Brito, Vice Admiral Nowell, Ms. DeFilippi, Lieutenant General Ottignon, Ms. Mulcahy, how will you seek to apply Deputy Secretary Hicks' model to reform the services we provide military families in the Exceptional Family Member Program, using outside, independent experts, stakeholders across the Federal Government and an evidence-based approach?

Secretary CISNEROS. The Department acknowledges the importance of leveraging the expertise of outside experts, independent experts, and stakeholders across the Federal Government, as well as utilizing an evidence-based approach to reform services and supports provided to military families with disability-related needs. The Department utilizes an evidence-based, collaborative approach incorporating the expertise of various stakeholders and outside experts as a component of the continuous improvement process and will continue to use this model to enhance and improve services to military families with disability-related needs. Additionally, the Department used an evidence-based approach to develop performance metrics to measure program effectiveness to identify programmatic successes and proactively

address barriers impacting military families. Currently, the Department is in the process of initiating implementation of the performance metrics across the Military Departments.

Lieutenant General BRITO. The Army defers to OSD for guidance. The Army will follow and support OSD's lead.

Vice Admiral NOWELL. We are fully engaged implementing the Exceptional Family Member Program (EFMP) requirements mandated by the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2021 to consolidate EFMP into a single headquarters site, increasing the number of full time headquarters staff, and meeting DOD standardization efforts. To improve our program, we leveraged outside EFMP advocacy groups, non-profits, as well as our internal subject matter experts to hold information sharing sessions with EFMP families as part of a month-long awareness campaign. We conducted surveys with EFMP families to better understand how we can improve our support. We conducted pilots to ensure our manning at our family support centers meets the needs of our EFMP families. We conducted special education attorney pilots to determine what the demand signal is for legal special education support, while concurrently training over 50 military and civil legal assistant attorneys to assist EFMP families across the Fleet. Further, all new incoming judge advocates now receive specialized legal training from the College of William and Mary to better support our EFMP families.

Ms. DeFILIPPI. In 2020, the DAF began a major transformation of the Exceptional Family Member Program (EFMP). A Highly Qualified Expert with 26 years' experience in private industry as a process improvement engineer, was brought onboard as the lead. With no military or traditional program delivery background, she immediately began to gather data, identify and address program shortfalls and implement customer-focused solutions. This best practice approach yielded major reforms and initiatives, facilitating a major shift in how the DAF delivers EFMP services. Centralization, process improvement, and major automation efforts streamlined requirements, reduced timelines, increased access to information and services for our families, and reduced member appointment/paperwork requirements by 90 percent.

Lieutenant General OTTIGNON. The Marine Corps EFMP is fully participating in all OSD-led working groups associated with EFMP standardization and is prepared to meet all Service-level reporting requirements, addressed in the Fiscal Year 2021 NDAA. For example, the Marine Corps has already selected a fourth attorney to support families in Virginia and the National Capital Region, anticipated start date June 2022. Other attorneys are located at Camp Pendleton, Camp Lejeune and Marine Corps Base Hawaii, providing regional legal support and representation for EFMP families. The Marine Corps has also submitted eight nomination packages, representing a diverse group of EFMP-enrolled sponsors and family members, in support of the OSD EFMP Family Advisory Panel.

Ms. MULCAHY. In 2020, the DAF began a major transformation of the Exceptional Family member Program (EFMP). A Highly Qualified Expert with 26 years' experience in private industry as a process improvement engineer, was brought onboard as the lead. With no military or traditional program delivery background, she immediately began to gather data, identify and address program shortfalls and implement customer-focused solutions. This best practice approach yielded major reforms and initiatives, facilitating a major shift in how the DAF delivers EFMP services. Centralization, process improvement, and major automation efforts streamlined requirements, reduced timelines, increased access to information and services for our families, and reduced member appointment/paperwork requirements by 90 percent.

15. Senator WARREN. Secretary Cisneros, Lieutenant General Brito, Vice General Nowell, General Ottignon, Ms. DeFilippi, Ms. Mulcahy, how would you include military families in that reform approach?

Secretary CISNEROS. The input of military families is essential to the reform approach. The Department obtains the knowledge and expertise of families through the facilitation of advisory panels designed to utilize military families as strategic partners in program improvement. The Department will continue to partner with military families to inform programmatic improvements.

Lieutenant General BRITO. The Army defers to OSD for guidance. The Army will follow and support OSD's lead.

Vice Admiral NOWELL. We stay engaged with our families through survey tools, needs assessments, and focus groups as well as our Ombudsman network. An ongoing challenge is getting the word out to our spouses and families of the myriad of resources that are available. To do this we have leveraged our Ombudsman network, where we can share information and resources, local, regional and national information campaigns through digital media, events such as designating September as EFMP Month to highlight our efforts to improve services delivered, and cam-

paigns at the installation level to reach out to our families to share services that are available to our families, including non-medical counseling, financial planning and budgeting, job search, resume building, and transition services.

Ms. DEFILIPPI. The DAF engaged with families from the outset of our transformation effort, initially via a Rapid Improvement Event conducted in February 2020. During that event, we solicited family feedback, identified problem areas, implemented solutions focused on improving transparency, automation and communication. Twenty-nine issues were identified at the event and 34% of those issues were linked to a decentralized process. Forty-four enhancements were identified and, it was “centralization” that was identified as the “optimal” enhancement. We continue to update our families at least bimonthly via interactive Facebook events where they are able to ask questions, provide feedback and talk with Subject Matter Experts available to respond to their specific concerns. Customer feedback is the critical foundation of our approach to change.

Lieutenant General OTTIGNON. The Marine Corps has submitted eight nomination packages, representing a diverse group of EFMP-enrolled sponsors and family members, in support of the OSD EFMP Family Advisory Panel.

Ms. MULCAHY. The DAF engaged with families from the outset of our transformation effort, initially via a Rapid Improvement Event conducted in Feb 2020. During that event, we solicited family feedback, identified problem areas, implemented solutions focused on improving transparency, automation and communication. Twenty-nine issues were identified at the event and 34 percent of those issues were linked to a decentralized process. Forty-four enhancements were identified and, it was “centralization” that was identified as the ‘optimal’ enhancement. We continue to update our families at least bimonthly via interactive Facebook events where they are able to ask questions, provide feedback and talk with Subject Matter Experts available to respond to their specific concerns. Customer feedback is the critical foundation of our approach to change.

16. Secretary Cisneros, General Brito, General Nowell, General Ottignon, Ms. DeFilippi, Ms. Mulcahy, what’s your timeline for applying these reforms?

Secretary CISNEROS. The Department is currently applying these reforms, which will evolve as new requirements present themselves. We are utilizing an evidence-based approach, leveraging the knowledge of subject matter experts and military families, to continually reform the services and support provided to military families with disability-related needs. We will continue to apply these reforms as we improve and enhance the provision of services to military families.

Lieutenant General BRITO. The Army defers to OSD for guidance. The Army will follow and support OSD’s lead.

Vice Admiral NOWELL. Our EFMP central office and hiring of additional case workers will be complete in late fiscal year 2024.

Ms. DEFILIPPI. The DAF is 60 percent complete in our multi-year transformation journey and accomplishments to date include centralization of resources, staffing/manning studies, and automation initiatives. The Exceptional Family Member Program (EFMP) Central Cell is 80 percent resourced and estimated to reach 100 percent resourcing by summer 2022. We introduced an automated Family Member Travel Screening (FMTS) process and Exceptional Assignment Case Management System 30 Aug 2021, adding EFMP enrollment capability in Jun 2022 and developing a Family Support component that will assess and track delivery of services in calendar year 2023.

Lieutenant General OTTIGNON. The USMC is prepared to meet all directed timelines.

Ms. MULCAHY. The DAF is 60 percent complete in our multi-year transformation journey and accomplishments to date include centralization of resources, staffing/manning studies, and automation initiatives. The Exceptional Family Member Program (EFMP) Central Cell is 80 percent resourced and estimated to reach 100 percent resourcing by summer 2022. We introduced an automated Family Member Travel Screening (FMTS) process and Exceptional Assignment Case Management System 30 Aug 2021, adding EFMP enrollment capability in Jun 2022 and developing a Family Support component that will assess and track delivery of services in calendar year 2023.

17. Senator WARREN. Secretary Cisneros, Lieutenant General Brito, Vice Admiral Nowell, General Ottignon, Ms. DeFilippi, Ms. Mulcahy, how can Congress assist you in applying these reforms?

Secretary CISNEROS. Congress’s continued support of the Department’s efforts to enhance and improve the services and supports provided to military families with disability-related needs is essential to the success of the enhancement measures. As

the needs of military families evolve, the Department will remain steadfast in actions to improve their experiences continually.

Lieutenant General BRITO. The Army defers to OSD for guidance. The Army will follow and support OSD's lead.

Vice Admiral NOWELL. As members of Congress engage with family members, I would ask you to continue to emphasize the programs and information available to support our military families.

Ms. DEFILIPPI. Thank you for your continued interest and support in the Exceptional Family Member Program (EFMP). Continued resourcing support for EFMP transformation and service delivery will enable a strong base of support for DAF families. Demand for EFMP Respite Care is high and the need for a wider network of providers accepting and supporting TRICARE is needed. Partnering with local communities, particularly in more rural and/or remote areas, to expand the availability of TRICARE supporting medical care for our members and their families would be helpful. Additionally, support of Defense Health Agency's EFMP efforts, particularly their TRICARE engagement and Developmental-Behavioral Family Readiness Center initiative which began in 2020 to provide developmental pediatrics and mental health for children and adults at small and remote bases through virtual health, teleconsultation and provider travel using a centralized hub and spoke model would be appreciated. We look forward to continuing to provide care solutions for our airmen, guardians and families.

Lieutenant General OTIGNON. We believe that we have the authorities we need to implement the reforms, but will engage Congress if new authorities are required.

Ms. MULCAHY. Thank you for your continued interest and support in the Exceptional Family Member Program (EFMP). Continued resourcing support for EFMP transformation and service delivery will enable a strong base of support for DAF families. Demand for EFMP Respite Care is high and the need for a wider network of providers accepting and supporting TRICARE is needed. Congressional advocacy and partnering with local communities, particularly in more rural and/or remote areas, to expand the availability of TRICARE supporting medical care for our members and their families would be helpful. Additionally, support of Defense Health Agency's EFMP efforts, particularly their TRICARE engagement and Developmental-Behavioral Family Readiness Center initiative which began in 2020 to provide developmental pediatrics and mental health for children and adults at small and remote bases through virtual health, teleconsultation and provider travel using a centralized hub and spoke model would be appreciated. We look forward to continuing to partner with Congress to provide care solutions for our airmen, guardians and families.

#### SERVICE CONTRACTING COSTS

18. Senator WARREN. Secretary Cisneros, 10 USC §4505 requires the Secretary of Defense to prepare and submit to Congress an annual inventory of "a summary of the inventory, of activities performed during the preceding fiscal year pursuant to staff augmentation contracts and contracts closely associated with inherently governmental functions on behalf of the Department of Defense." Your office is responsible for developing the guidance for that reporting, including calculating contractor full-time equivalents for direct labor, using direct labor hours in a manner that is comparable to the calculation of Department of Defense civilian full-time employees. Those calculations should indicate approximately how many contractor employees the Department of Defense has. How many contractors work for the Department of Defense?

Secretary CISNEROS. The Department does not directly track contractor full-time equivalents (FTEs) outside of the Inventory of Contracted Services (ICS) required by 10 USC 4505. The ICS for Fiscal Year 2021, published by the Office of the Under Secretary of Defense for Acquisition and Sustainment, reported approximately 251K CFTEs. The ICS only includes contracts for services above a \$3M threshold and in four portfolio groups: logistics management, equipment-related, knowledge-based, and electronics and communications services. Additionally, the Fiscal Year 2021 ICS noted a number of service contracts that were not reported, which makes the CFTE number a likely undercount. Going forward, the Department anticipates the number will improve over time.

Because the Department uses firm fixed price contracts for a majority of contract services, these are estimates, rather than head counts. The Department contracts using performance-based methods and focuses on monitoring contract performance to achieve successful outcomes, rather than by individual contract inputs or people.

A successful service contract could, for example, take five full-time contractor personnel or ten part-time contractor personnel to perform the same task. Because the Department leaves it to the discretion of the contracted company to determine how best to organize its staff to meet the deliverables, these numbers can vary, and the Department does not have—or need—visibility into a company's staffing levels to achieve the required contract outcomes. For these reasons, the Department looks at the costs associated with contracted services rather than specific CFTE counts.

19. Senator WARREN. Secretary Cisneros, last year the Government Accountability Office raised concerns that the Department's transition from the Enterprise-wide Contractor Manpower Reporting Application (ECMRA) to the System for Award Management (SAM) would hinder the Department's ability to collect information on direct labor costs. Is the Department of Defense able to collect information on direct labor costs?

Secretary CISNEROS. SAM does not directly collect information on direct labor costs. However, SAM does collect information on funding associated with contracts, as well as contractor estimates of full-time equivalents, which can be used to calculate direct labor cost estimates.

20. Senator WARREN. Secretary Cisneros, since 2016 the Government Accountability Office has recommended the Department of Defense collect and report five year spending plans for contracted services across the Department. What is the status of the Department being able to project future costs of service contract spending over the future years defense plan?

Secretary CISNEROS. Projecting future costs of service contract spending is a responsibility assigned to the Under Secretary of Defense (Comptroller) and the Director of Cost Assessment and Program Evaluation in 10 U.S.C. § 4506. My office, however, stands ready to assist and support them, if needed.

21. Senator WARREN. Secretary Cisneros, how are you discharging your statutory role for assessing total force mix, including how contracted services are addressed?

Secretary CISNEROS. The Total Force Manpower & Analysis Directorate in P&R is responsible for providing overarching guidance to the Department on Total Force mix issues and manpower management. They translate law, regulation, and Executive-branch policy into a policy framework for all the Defense Components to use in determining their individual workforce mixes. These policies include guidance for assessing the use of contracted services to ensure that private sector sourcing is used when appropriate, efficient, and effective.

22. Senator WARREN. Ms. Penrod, are you able to comply with the requirements under 10 USC §4505 with the data collected through the System for Award Management (SAM)?

Ms. PENROD. Yes. SAM allows the Department to comply with the requirements in 10 U.S.C. § 4505. Additionally, SAM bypasses the need for an internal data call within the Department to fulfill the annual Inventory reporting requirements in 10 U.S.C. § 4505, which reduces the possibility of human error in the data.

23. Senator WARREN. Secretary Cisneros, do you think your office will have the data necessary to comply with 10 U.S.C. §4506 to support the validation of requirements for service contracts and decisions regarding the procurement of services as part of total force management policies and procedures by February 1, 2023?

Secretary CISNEROS. The responsibilities in 10 U.S.C. § 4506 are delineated to the Under Secretary of Defense (Comptroller) and the Director of Cost Assessment and Program Evaluation. My office, however, stands ready to assist and support them however we can, if needed.

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#### QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY SENATOR THOM TILLIS

##### USD P&R

24. Senator TILLIS. Secretary Cisneros, the Under Secretary of Defense has a statutory total force management responsibility to optimize the balance between military, civilian employee and contract support based on risk and cost. When faced with increasing operational demand and reduced accessions, stress on the all-volunteer military is affected with more high demand low density military occupational

specialties. This makes it extremely important to optimize your mix so that the civilian workforce or contractors can relieve military of functions that do not require military performance as one way of reducing stress on the force. And where continuity of operations is required for “critical functions” or where “closely associated with inherently governmental functions” require sufficient government skill sets for proper oversight of contracted actions, “special consideration” should be given to civilian employee performance. On the other hand, where emerging technologies are involved where the skills are not yet developed in the government, the private sector has a role to play as well. What are you going to do to improve the USD P&R performance of this statutory function, particularly given its potential to mitigate some of the stress on the all-volunteer military?

Secretary CISNEROS. There is no “one size fits all” solution for workforce mix. P&R policies provide a framework for the Defense Components to allow individual commanders and managers to operate within the confines of law, regulation, and Executive-wide policy while maintaining a maximum amount of flexibility. This allows individual organizations to have workforce mixes informed by their unique missions and “facts on the ground.” Total Force policy already requires that military personnel be directed to military essential functions, which reduces the stress on the force. Additionally, the unique benefits of civilian personnel and contracted services are also taken into account in these policies.

25. Senator TILLIS. Secretary Cisneros, recent CNA Studies on “Optimizing Total Force Management” issued in July 2021 and an April 2019 IDA Study on “Revisiting the Criteria for Military Essentiality in Total Force Management” make some overlapping criticisms on the need to update the DODI 1100.22 for total force management, which was last updated in December 2017. These reports highlight the effects of personnel caps in disincentivizing the use of civilian employees, the lack of transparency over contractor execution data and projections over the FYDP, and the need to include the Army’s sourcing checklist to operationalize and make clearer the guidance in DODI 1100.22. Additionally, the studies criticize USD P&R staff for failing to be active in CAPE and Comptroller led issue team programmatic reviews with the Military Departments. Are you familiar with these reports?

Secretary CISNEROS. Yes, I am familiar with these reports. The Total Force Manpower & Analysis Directorate in the Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Manpower & Reserve Affairs was the sponsor for those reports and is responsible for the implementation of their associated recommendations.

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#### QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY SENATOR JOSH HAWLEY

26. Senator HAWLEY. Secretary Cisneros, how many servicemembers, within each individual service and across them, have been discharged as a result of the vaccine requirement?

Secretary CISNEROS. I have established a senior level working group that will gather this information and we will provide it when complete.

27. Senator HAWLEY. Secretary Cisneros, of those servicemembers discharged as a result of the vaccine requirement, what percentage across and within each service were issued as “general discharge under honorable conditions” rather than “honorable discharge”?

Secretary CISNEROS. I have established a senior level working group that will gather this information and we will provide it when complete.

28. Senator HAWLEY. Secretary Cisneros, has the Office of the Secretary of Defense directed the services to evaluate character of discharge related to Covid-19 vaccination by any uniform process or criteria?

Secretary CISNEROS. Separations are used to strengthen the concept that military service is a unique calling, different from that of a civilian occupation. The acquisition of military status, whether through appointment, enlistment or induction, involves an individual’s commitment to the United States, their Military Service, fellow citizens, and fellow servicemembers. The uniform policies and procedures for the equitable processing of administrative separations are contained in DOD Instruction 1332.14 and DOD Instruction 1332.30.

29. Senator HAWLEY. Secretary Cisneros, if the Office of the Secretary of Defense directed the services to evaluate character of discharge related to Covid-19 vaccination by any uniform process or criteria, please provide a copy of that guidance; if not, why not?

Secretary CISNEROS. The uniform policies to evaluate the characterization of service are contained in DOD Instruction 1332.14 and DOD Instruction 1332.30. Those standing policies were modified by Section 736 of the National Defense Authorization Act of 2022, where Congress specifically directed that servicemembers separated for failure to obey a lawful order to receive a vaccine for coronavirus 2019 could only result in an honorable discharge or a general discharge under honorable conditions. The Instructions in question may be viewed at: <https://www.esd.whs.mil/Directives/issuances/dodi/>

30. Senator HAWLEY. Secretary Cisneros, prior to the enactment of the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2022, how many servicemembers did receive a dishonorable discharge because they were unable or unwilling to be vaccinated against COVID-19?

Secretary CISNEROS. I have established a senior level working group that will gather this information and we will provide it when complete.

31. Senator HAWLEY. Ms. Foster, is there indication that pandemic-related restrictions and health mandates have adversely impacted the mental health of servicemembers and their families?

Ms. FOSTER. Masking and physical distancing, although necessary to reduce the spread of COVID-19, may create feelings of isolation, and increase our stress and anxiety levels. Nationwide, stressors, behavioral health concerns, and demand for behavioral health care, appear to be increased by the COVID-19 pandemic, and Servicemembers are likely not immune to these challenges. Examples include:

- U.S. Surgeon General Vivek H. Murthy released a public health advisory on December 7, 2021 regarding alarming trends in mental health, including rising suicide rates and increasing depressive and anxiety symptoms of young people, all of which are exacerbated by the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic.
- American Psychological Association. Stress in America 2021: Stress and Decision-Making During the Pandemic indicated a behavior change for adult as a result of stress during the pandemic (<https://www.apa.org/news/press/releases/stress/2021/october-infographics>).
- Recently published DODIG report 2022-081, "Evaluation of Department of Defense Military Medical Treatment Facility Challenges During the Coronavirus Disease-2019 (COVID-19) Pandemic in Fiscal Year 2021" (April, 2022), indicate that MTF staff reported an increase in operational stress, challenges associated with staff burnout due to personnel shortages and operational challenges, and the use of mental health services due to workload stressors (<https://media.defense.gov/2022/Apr/06/2002970821/-1/-1/1/DODIG-2022-081-REDACTED.PDF>).
- A Medical Surveillance Monthly Report (MSMR) (May 2021, Vol 28 No 5) assessed 2020 hospitalizations and ambulatory visits of the Active component. Mental health diagnosis numbers, rates, and ranks appeared similar between 2016, 2018, and 2020, with mental health as the top diagnosis at discharge for hospitalizations and in the top 5 for ambulatory visits.

32. Senator HAWLEY. Dr. Smith, what is DOD's estimate for the universe of individuals who would qualify for the presumption of service connection for burn pit exposure, given how many individuals were likely exposed since 2001?

Dr. SMITH. Approximately 3.0 million servicemembers deployed after September 2001 to South West Asia, Afghanistan, Djibouti and other countries where exposures to airborne particulate matter, including burn pit emissions, was possible. Thus, these servicemembers would be eligible to submit a claim for presumption of a service connection for a medical condition associated with such exposures. In addition, approximately 0.7 million servicemembers deployed to the Persian Gulf War from 1990 to 1991. These servicemembers would also be eligible to submit a claim.

In recent years, military families participating in the Exceptional Family Members Program have encountered numerous systemic challenges, including the widely criticized changes to the Autism Cares Demonstration program and TRICARE coverage, which has limited settings in which children with autism spectrum disorder can receive important treatment.

Last summer, Deputy Secretary Dr. Hicks testified on the findings and recommendations of the Independent Review Commission on Sexual Assault in the Military. Dr. Hicks highlighted the benefits of bringing in outside experts, adopting an evidence-based approach, and engaging stakeholders as a best practice approach. These families would benefit from applying what Dr. Hicks called a best practice approach, a sprint to deliver change fast.



33. Senator HAWLEY. Lieutenant General Brito, military housing has a direct impact on many of the issues we're talking about here today, from servicemembers and their families' physical health to mental health, suicide, and related challenges. Despite this—and despite assurances to the contrary—it seems that the Army continues to drag its feet on long overdue housing improvements at Fort Leonard Wood in my home state of Missouri. Will you commit that the Army will provide a full update on the Out-Year Development Plan to replace aging housing at Fort Leonard Wood in the next seven days, so we have that information ahead of the Army posture hearing?

Lieutenant General BRITO. Fort Leonard Wood remains a priority for Balfour Beatty Communities (BBC) and the Army to address aging inventory. FLW ODP 2014–2019 was a no new work plan to build funds in the Reinvestment Account for future new construction. On 10 Aug 20, DASA IH&P provided concept approval for FLW ODP 2020–2025 to demolish and replace 59 homes, with \$1M approved for development of the full package for approval. Record levels of construction-related inflation, combined with years of stagnant to falling BAH, now make new construction at Fort Leonard Wood extremely challenging. On 22 February 22, the garrison and BBC leadership began to shift focus from new builds to more economically feasible renovations to address aged and or failing major systems within legacy homes. They are currently developing the full scope to submit to DASA IH&P for approval. The current new build design process will continue, with the intent to shorten the design window when additional funding is available for new builds in the future.

BBC and the Army continue to seek out innovative ways to facilitate redevelopment at

Fort Leonard Wood. The garrison has taken actions to submit BAH reconsiderations within their Military Housing Area to make it more competitive under the current housing conditions. Fort Leonard Wood consistently remains in the Army's Top 3 recommendations to OSD for Section 606 funds distribution. BBC is also in the due diligence phase of potentially pursuing an energy savings contract that could provide funds towards water and lighting retrofits and new HVAC systems.

34. Senator HAWLEY. General Ottignon, I applaud Commandant Berger's vision for the future force, as articulated in his planning guidance and Force Design 2030. Can you address how Talent Management 2030 supports his direction to urgently prepare for modern combat?

Lieutenant General OTTIGNON. Our legacy personnel system was designed in the industrial era with assumptions about human capital which are now superseded by modern technological advantages of the information age. While improved upon over the years, this system is not well suited for the cultural and technological changes of today's world and tomorrow's Marines. Talent Management 2030 (TM2030) describes a fundamental redesign of this system, empowered by the new statutory authorities provided by Congress, at a critical juncture for change. We are grateful for the additional authorities provided by Congress to enable us to better serve our servicemembers, their families, and our Nation. TM2030 details how the Marine Corps will implement new models for recruiting and retaining 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. The vision for 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. It will empower Marines and improve transparency, objectivity, and flexibility in their careers. With a modernized talent management system, we will better harness, develop, and compete for the unique skills and strengths demanded of Marines.

35. Senator HAWLEY. Vice Admiral Nowell and General Ottignon, by my estimate, your services have the highest rates of separation for vaccine status. As you recall, Secretary Austin's guidance to the Military Departments in August 2021 allowed exemptions to the Covid-19 requirement under existing service regulations.

How do the Navy and the Marine Corps evaluate requested exemptions related to sincerely held religious beliefs or previous infection?

Vice Admiral NOWELL. Sailors and Navy applicants seeking religious accommodations for waiver of immunization requirements must submit written requests to my office, where each is reviewed on a case-by-case basis, and decisions are based on the full range of facts and circumstances relative to the compelling governmental interests.

A Navy chaplain conducts an administrative interview and prepares a memorandum for the record prior to the commanding officer's endorsement of the pack-

age. The sailor includes an administrative counseling form which states they have been counseled by a military physician on the risk to their health due to exposure to disease and the benefits and risks of vaccine. The commanding officer endorses the request and addresses the impact approval of the request would have on mission accomplishment, including military readiness, unit cohesion, good order and discipline, health and safety. The commanding officer should also address the religious importance of the religious accommodation to the requestor, the cumulative impact of repeated religious accommodations of a similar nature, and alternative means available to accommodate the request.

Sailors are able to include any documentation they feel is necessary to support the approval of their request. Commands then submit religious exemption requests to my office. Once received, each package is individually reviewed by an action officer, legal counsel, the offices of the Chief of Chaplains and the Bureau of Medicine and Surgery before being routed to me for detailed review and adjudication.

Members who receive a disapproval are afforded the opportunity to appeal to the Chief of Naval Operations, who is the final adjudication authority in the religious accommodation process.

Previous infection by the SARS-CoV-2 virus is not an indication for a COVID vaccine exemption. Currently, there are no established immune correlates of protection for SARS-CoV-2, with which medical personnel can determine whether someone is protected from COVID after vaccination or natural infection. With no FDA-authorized or approved test to measure an individual's immunity from infection by the SARS-CoV-2 virus, vaccination is the only safe, controlled, and reliable method of delivering the necessary protection.

Lieutenant General OTTIGNON. Pursuant to the Religious Freedom Restoration Act (RFRA) of 1993, the Marine Corps established a process to evaluate each requested exemption on a case-by-case basis. The Service conducts careful analysis of each individual's particular circumstances, religious beliefs, legal burdens, as well as case-by-case evaluation of each request's impact on the Marine Corps' compelling governmental interest in mission accomplishment at the individual, unit, and organizational levels, to include military readiness, unit cohesion, good order and discipline, and health and safety. In requesting an exemption, each Marine submits their request with evaluations and recommendations from their command chaplain and their chain-of-command through the General Court-Martial Convening Authority. Per Department of Defense policy, I am the Commandant of the Marine Corps' appointee to adjudicate each Marine's request, and I am assisted in the deliberation process by a full time legal counselor, the Director of Health Services, a chaplain and an advisory board. Each and every request goes through the same deliberative process before I make any decision. Any appeal to my decision is sent directly to the Assistant Commandant of the Marine Corps for final adjudication. The process is deliberate, time consuming, and taken very seriously by everyone involved.

