

Stenographic Transcript  
Before the

Subcommittee on Personnel

COMMITTEE ON  
ARMED SERVICES

## **UNITED STATES SENATE**

TO RECEIVE TESTIMONY ON MILITARY AND CIVILIAN  
PERSONNEL PROGRAMS IN THE DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE  
IN REVIEW OF THE DEFENSE AUTHORIZATION REQUEST FOR  
FISCAL YEAR 2025 AND THE FUTURE YEARS DEFENSE  
PROGRAM

WEDNESDAY, MAY 8, 2024

Washington, DC

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1 TO RECEIVE TESTIMONY ON MILITARY AND CIVILIAN PERSONNEL  
2 PROGRAMS IN THE DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE IN REVIEW OF THE  
3 DEFENSE AUTHORIZATION REQUEST FOR FISCAL YEAR 2025 AND THE  
4 FUTURE YEARS DEFENSE PROGRAM

5  
6 Wednesday, May 8, 2024

7  
8 U.S. Senate  
9 Committee on Armed Services  
10 Subcommittee on Personnel  
11 Washington, D.C.  
12

13 The committee met, pursuant to notice, at 3:00 p.m. in  
14 Room SD-G50, Dirksen Senate Office Building, Hon. Elizabeth  
15 Warren, chairman of the subcommittee, presiding.

16 Committee Members Present: Senators Warren  
17 [presiding], Blumenthal, Hirono, Kaine, Duckworth, Scott,  
18 Sullivan, and Budd.

19 Also Present: Senator King.  
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1           OPENING STATEMENT OF HON. ELIZABETH WARREN, U.S.  
2 SENATOR FROM MASSACHUSETTS

3           Senator Warren: This hearing will come to order.

4           Good afternoon and welcome to the Personnel  
5 Subcommittee's hearing to receive testimony on military and  
6 civilian personnel programs in the Department of Defense and  
7 military services. Our annual posture hearing provides the  
8 Department and military services the opportunity to discuss  
9 their personnel priorities for the coming year.

10          It is also a chance for the members of this  
11 subcommittee to continue to address the major challenges  
12 confronting our all-volunteer force. I am pleased to see  
13 the military services are making progress in addressing  
14 their recruiting challenges since our last posture hearing.  
15 Nice work. It is critical that we welcome and support  
16 anyone who wants to serve their country.

17          There are several topics I want to focus on today with  
18 our witnesses. First, if we want to continue to have the  
19 most powerful military in the world, we need to be smarter  
20 about resources. Last July, this subcommittee held a  
21 hearing looking at opportunities to better manage the DoD  
22 workforce and, at the same time, to reduce costs.

23          Now, while most people think DoD workforce is made up  
24 only of military and civilian employees, there is also a  
25 huge band of contractors, providing consulting, legal, and

1 accounting services. Witnesses from the Congressional  
2 Budget Office and the Government Accountability Office told  
3 us that we do not know how many are on the payroll, or even  
4 how much we are paying. In September, the GAO released a  
5 report describing how we are missing out on billions of  
6 dollars' worth of opportunities to be smarter about how we  
7 manage this contractor workforce.

8 If we can be smarter with our resources it could save  
9 billions of dollars that could then be used to support  
10 servicemembers and their families.

11 There are two areas on this in particular that I would  
12 like to focus on. First is military housing. I have worked  
13 with my colleagues on this committee to address significant  
14 shortfalls in the quality of housing that we provide to our  
15 servicemembers, and we will keep working on that. But we  
16 also have another huge housing problem. There simply is not  
17 enough housing for active duty military.

18 By some estimates, we are short at least 7 million  
19 housing units nationwide, and that shortage has a big impact  
20 on military families. You know, every few years, sometimes  
21 every few months, we ask families to pack their bags and  
22 move, often to communities where there are not nearly enough  
23 affordable homes. These housing shortages force military  
24 families to strain their budgets and pay prices they cannot  
25 afford or to undergo long commutes. Those higher housing

1 and commuting costs should be covered by the basic housing  
2 allowance that DoD provides to military families. But the  
3 most recent Blue Star Families survey found that nearly  
4 three-quarters of military families living in civilian  
5 housing are paying more than \$200 out of pocket.

6 Congress acknowledged this problem in fiscal year 2019.  
7 It created the Defense Community Infrastructure Program,  
8 DCIP, because we have to have an acronym for everything, to  
9 help communities address community infrastructure shortfalls  
10 near military installations. Now, DoD made clear from this  
11 program's inception, that its top priority -- top priority  
12 -- was, quote, "military quality of life, military  
13 resilience, and military value in that order," close quote.  
14 I look forward to hearing from our witnesses about how this  
15 program could be used to help address our military's housing  
16 crisis.

17 Another area we should be investing in our military  
18 personnel is childcare. Accessing childcare remains a  
19 problem for all families, military and civilian. Two-thirds  
20 of active duty military families have children living at  
21 home. We must modernize and improve the way that DoD  
22 ensures that servicemembers and their families have access  
23 to affordable, high-quality childcare.

24 I know that this is a top priority for many of the  
25 members of this committee. I have very much appreciated

1 Ranking Member Scott's partnership and commitment on this  
2 issue. Right now, there are thousands of vacancies for  
3 childcare workers across DoD Child Care Development Centers,  
4 which means fewer available childcare spots for military  
5 families. The Department has put together a plan to finally  
6 update the pay scale for childcare workers. I am  
7 particularly interested in hearing from our witnesses from  
8 the military services about how increasing childcare  
9 capacity could help us continue to recruit and retain the  
10 best in the military world.

11 We must do better to support our military families.  
12 And so I want to say to our witnesses, welcome. Thank you  
13 for appearing.

14 We are going to have two panels today. The first panel  
15 consists of officials from the Office of the Secretary of  
16 Defense who cover the full range of military and civilian  
17 personnel programs.

18 The Honorable Ashish Vari, Variani -- Varizani. I know  
19 I know how to do this. Did I get close? Vazirani. It just  
20 took me a minute to look. I apologize. Acting  
21 Undersecretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness.  
22 Thank you, Mr. Secretary.

23 The Honorable Robert Keohane, Assistant Secretary of  
24 Defense for Manpower and Reserve Affairs.

25 Dr. Lester Martinez-Lopez, Assistant Secretary of

1 Defense for Health Affairs.

2 And Beth Foster, Executive Director of the Office of  
3 Force Resiliency.

4 The second panel will consist of the personnel leaders  
5 for the military services. I will introduce them when they  
6 sit down. And now I will turn to Senator Scott for his  
7 opening statement.

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1           OPENING STATEMENT OF HON. RICK SCOTT, U.S. SENATOR  
2 FROM FLORIDA

3           Senator Scott: First I want to thank Chair Warren and  
4 her team for this hearing today, and I want to thank Chair  
5 Warren for her commitment to trying to do everything we can  
6 to improve the opportunity for our servicemembers to live a  
7 very fruitful, enjoyable career.

8           I joined the Navy at 18, and I can tell you, back then  
9 it was \$125 difference in what they paid in BAQ to our  
10 apartment, and I was only getting paid \$334 a month. So it  
11 was a problem then, and it is still a problem today. But I  
12 did want the chair to care about this.

13           In preparation for our upcoming work on the National  
14 Defense Authorization Act for fiscal year 2025, this hearing  
15 is an opportunity for the Department of Defense senior  
16 leaders to identify areas where we, in the Congress, can  
17 help take care of our military's most valuable asset. It is  
18 the one committee I am on that actually -- we were just  
19 talking about this -- it actually works well together, it is  
20 a bipartisan committee, and you can have an amendment and  
21 you get your best shot at trying to get it in there.

22           So as well know, the military's most valuable asset is  
23 the people who volunteer to serve our country, in and out of  
24 uniform. Military recruiting continues to be an area of  
25 concern, but we have heard about a lot of success lately.



1 At the end of March, the active duty recruitment recruited  
2 approximately 1,200 more recruits this year than it did the  
3 same time last year, which is a positive. Most of the  
4 services are expressing cautious optimism about meeting  
5 recruiting goals this year, which is great. That is great.  
6 Unfortunately, we reduced our goals this year, so our goals  
7 this year are lower than last year.

8 Despite modest progress, we cannot let this issue fade.  
9 We have got to continue to find great men and women that  
10 want to serve, and there are great men and women all across  
11 our country, including my state, that want to serve.

12 I am concerned about the MHS GENESIS implementation and  
13 how this is impacting recruiting, and we are hearing that  
14 around my state. We hear a lot that GENESIS makes the  
15 process too long and disqualifies candidates too quickly for  
16 issues that can and should be waived. It is not helping our  
17 recruiting efforts, and we still have them.

18 As Secretary Martinez-Lopez has heard, I cannot  
19 understand for the life of me why we buy anything from  
20 China. Whether it is computers, drugs, whatever it is -- we  
21 had a good subcommittee hearing I guess last week, and I  
22 think we had a good conversation about how we can try to  
23 figure out how we can improve that. So I want to thank  
24 everybody that is focused on that, but I want to buy nothing  
25 from China, absolutely nothing. They want to destroy each

1 of our ways of life. They kill our citizens through  
2 fentanyl. They do all sorts of bad things. So I know the  
3 chair has the same goal that we do. We have got to figure  
4 out how to reduce our dependence on China to nothing.

5 We have heard a lot of concerns about the Department  
6 positioning itself to compete for civilian talent. There  
7 are lots of people that are complaining about that. You  
8 know, what people are saying is it is not just a failure to  
9 compete in the private sector but also are losing out to  
10 other Federal agencies. And I think our most important  
11 agency is Defense, and the most important thing we do in the  
12 Federal Government is defense. This committee has provided  
13 new hiring, pay, and management authorities for civilian  
14 employees every year in the NDAA. These were requested by  
15 component within the Defense Department because the former  
16 process is blocked in the Pentagon and at the Office of  
17 Personnel Management.

18 So clearly we have got to do something better. I want  
19 to continue to find out ways that we can improve civilian  
20 hiring to make sure that, you know, what we can do to  
21 improve hiring compensation, management skills,  
22 accountability, all these things.

23 Any of us that have come, and I think we all have had  
24 time in the private sector, you know you have got to find  
25 the best people and you have got to hold them accountable,

1 so we have got to keep doing that better.

2           These three broad areas -- recruiting, health care, and  
3 civil service reform -- will improve overall military  
4 readiness but also have the additional benefit of improving  
5 military quality of life. More recruits will help lighten  
6 the load for those already in uniform because we are clearly  
7 understaffed right now. Better aligned resources for the  
8 military health system will improve quality and access to  
9 care for servicemembers and their families, and a reformed  
10 civil service will help ensure a high quality civilian  
11 workforce who provides administrative support for our men  
12 and women in uniform and our military families.

13           Thanks to all the witnesses for being here, and I look  
14 forward to working with you. And again, I want to thank the  
15 chair.

16           Senator Warren: Thank you, Ranking Member Scott.

17           Secretary Vazirani, you are recognized for an opening  
18 statement.

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1           JOINT STATEMENT OF THE HON. ASHISH S. VAZIRANI, ACTING  
2 UNDER SECRETARY OF DEFENSE FOR PERSONNEL AND READINESS; THE  
3 HON. RONALD T. KEOHANE, ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF DEFENSE FOR  
4 MANPOWER AND RESERVE AFFAIRS; THE HON. LESTER MARTINEZ-  
5 LOPEZ, ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF DEFENSE FOR HEALTH AFFAIRS;  
6 ELIZABETH B. FOSTER, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF THE OFFICE OF  
7 FORCE RESILIENCY

8           Mr. Vazirani: Good afternoon, Chair Warren, Ranking  
9 Member Scott, distinguished members of the Personnel  
10 Subcommittee. Thank you for the opportunity to testify  
11 before you today, along with my Personnel and Readiness  
12 colleagues. We are proud to support the members of our  
13 total force, the 2.3 million active and reserve  
14 servicemembers, their 2.6 million family members, and the  
15 900,000 civilian employees of the Department of Defense.  
16 They are the true inspiration for our commitment to this  
17 work.

18           We are here to testify that the President's fiscal year  
19 2025 budget request enables the Department of Defense to  
20 execute the National Defense Strategy. We are addressing  
21 our current and future national security challenges in a  
22 complex global environment while taking care of our people  
23 and sustaining the finest fighting force in the world.

24           The value proposition we offer to our servicemembers  
25 currently serving, and those considering joining, is that

1 our people will be the most valued component of our national  
2 security. Our value proposition includes a meaningful  
3 mission, quality training and education, robust pay,  
4 compensation, and a benefits package that includes  
5 retirement and world-class health care to servicemembers and  
6 their families.

7 The fiscal year 2025 budget includes a 4.5 percent  
8 basic pay raise that, if approved, would deliver nearly 15  
9 percent in military pay raises over 3 years. The 14th  
10 Quadrennial Review of Military Compensation is reviewing  
11 additional ways to improve the model across our ranks.

12 We are working to promote a culture of safety for our  
13 men and women in uniform. Our focus on eliminating  
14 unnecessary risk is integral to our training and operations.  
15 To this end, we are updating our policy and implementation  
16 guidance to mitigate the risks of blast overpressure and  
17 continuing to prioritize solutions that minimize mishaps and  
18 other hazards to the well-being of our total force.

19 Likewise, to maintain trust in our institution, the  
20 military service must be free of harmful, readiness-  
21 detracting behaviors. Sexual assault, harassment, and other  
22 destructive behaviors have no place in the Department. One  
23 instance is one too many.

24 Preventing suicide and increasing access to mental  
25 health care remain areas of focus and investment. As

1 directed by the Secretary, we are taking deliberate and  
2 specific actions in line with the findings and  
3 recommendations of the Independent Review Commission on  
4 Sexual Assault in the Military and the Suicide Prevention  
5 and Response Independent Review Committee. These actions,  
6 to include the primary prevention workforce, will continue  
7 to move us toward healthier command climates.

8 We believe service is a family commitment. Therefore,  
9 the Department continues to vest in programs and services  
10 that support military families. Numerous partnerships and  
11 programs support the employment of military spouses and the  
12 financial security, stability, and the overall quality of  
13 life for military families.

14 With the fiscal year 2025 budget request, the  
15 Department has taken steps to improve access to and  
16 availability of childcare. In addition, the Department of  
17 Defense Education Activity, which operates the highest-  
18 performing school system in the nation, will now include  
19 universal pre-kindergarten, thanks to Congress' fiscal year  
20 2024 appropriation.

21 Our value proposition extends beyond military service.  
22 We support servicemembers and their families in their  
23 transition to civilian life. The Transition Assistance  
24 Program is a robust, individualized experience to give  
25 servicemembers the tools they need for continued success

1 after their service in uniform.

2 Finally, I want to highlight the Department's dedicated  
3 civilian workforce. Their importance and contributions to  
4 our mission cannot be overstated. They are the key to  
5 readiness, health, resilience, and safety of our fighting  
6 force, essential to the defense of our nation. The  
7 viability of our all-volunteer force is dependent on the  
8 contributions of our civilian talent and their dedication to  
9 the national security mission.

10 It will take a whole-of-nation and a whole-of-  
11 government approach to promote a national call to service  
12 that inspires young people to give back to their country.  
13 As we continue to collaborate with this subcommittee and the  
14 rest of Congress we will ask for your help and support in  
15 amplifying these messages.

16 Thank you for your continued support, and we look  
17 forward to your questions.

18 [The joint prepared statement of Mr. Vazirani, Mr.  
19 Ronald T. Keohane, Mr. Martinez-Lopez, and Ms. Foster  
20 follows:]

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1 Senator Warren: Thank you very much, Mr. Secretary.

2 So this year the Pentagon requested \$850 billion in  
3 funding, and some of my colleagues are howling that that is  
4 not enough. But before we talk about spending more money,  
5 we should examine opportunities for DoD to save billions of  
6 dollars.

7 When we talk about defense contractors, as I was saying  
8 earlier, most people think about Lockheed Martin or Boeing,  
9 but DoD also relies on service contractors, which are  
10 contractors like Booz Allen, McKinsey, and CACI, hired to do  
11 things like consulting, accounting, and strategic analysis.  
12 DoD's Cost Assessment and Program Evaluation Office found  
13 that, in some cases, those contractors can cost two or three  
14 times as much as a civilian employee doing the exact same  
15 work.

16 Secretary Vazirani, you oversee DoD's entire workforce,  
17 including the contractors. When determining the right mix  
18 of employees, servicemembers, and civilians, how important  
19 is it to have good cost data?

20 Mr. Vazirani: Senator, as stewards of the taxpayer  
21 dollars, it is very important that we have good cost data,  
22 and we do our very best to get accurate cost data as we  
23 develop our budgets.

24

25 Senator Warren: I am glad to hear you say that and I



1 agree with you entirely.

2           You know, the Congressional Budget Office and the  
3 Government Accountability Office told this committee last  
4 year that DoD does not know how many contractors it hires,  
5 does not have reliable data to determine if hiring a  
6 contractor will cost more money or less money than a Federal  
7 employee doing the same job, and that these decisions make  
8 it possible about -- it makes about service contractors pose  
9 one of the highest risks in government of taxpayers getting  
10 cheated.

11           The GAO released a report in September that found the  
12 military services are failing to collect and evaluate the  
13 workforce data that they need to clearly set priorities and  
14 identify efficiencies. The result is DoD is missing  
15 essential potential cost savings on service contractors,  
16 quote, "totaling billions of dollars."

17           Secretary Vazirani, spending on service contractors has  
18 more than doubled in just the past 25 years. The GAO  
19 estimates that we -- estimates -- that we spend about \$200  
20 billion on these contractors, though the CBO thinks it is  
21 closer to \$300 billion that we are spending. So do you  
22 think we ought to know how much we are actually paying?

23           Mr. Vazirani: Senator, I think it is very important  
24 that we know how much we are spending on these contracts and  
25 on these contractors. I --

1           Senator Warren: I appreciate your saying this, and I  
2 know that it may feel like the answer is, "Well, duh." But  
3 it is important that we get this on the record. And you are  
4 the one that is trying to run these programs, and it is  
5 critical that we get this information and have it when we  
6 are evaluating the decisions we make.

7           Now one of the types of contracts that DoD uses for  
8 these services is called an "indefinite delivery contract,"  
9 which is used when DoD does not know the time frame, or does  
10 not even know how many people that it needs to hire under  
11 these contracts.

12           So, Secretary Vazirani, about how often do you think  
13 that DoD uses an indefinite delivery contract to hire  
14 consultants and other contractors?

15           Mr. Vazirani: Senator, an indefinite delivery contract  
16 is one of many contracted vehicles available to the  
17 Department. They are typically used when there are emerging  
18 missions and we need that flexibility. It is my  
19 understanding that we utilize those contracts about 50  
20 percent of the time.

21           Senator Warren: Yeah, I think the GAO says it is 54  
22 percent of the time.

23           You know, I understand these contracts in extraordinary  
24 circumstances. But it cannot be a majority of the time that  
25 we are using contractors and still call it a surprise in any

1 way. More than half the time that we are signing these  
2 contracts we are not sure what we want, or when we want it,  
3 but we are committing to pay whatever is charged.

4 The civilian employees working alongside these  
5 contractors are under a whole lot more scrutiny, and we  
6 thank them for their service by asking them to endure pay  
7 cuts and freezes. As Ranking Member Wicker has pointed out,  
8 quote, "The Department also does not pay competitive  
9 salaries."

10 So, Secretary Vazirani, would you agree that failing to  
11 pay competitive salaries makes it challenging for DoD to  
12 build the civilian workforce that we need to protect our  
13 national security?

14 Mr. Vazirani: Senator, the civilian component of the  
15 total force is critical to our mission. We do need to  
16 ensure that we can compete. Over the last several years the  
17 Congress has given us the ability to increase pay for  
18 civilian employees. This year, given the total, the fiscal  
19 constraints, we have had to make some hard choices. But we  
20 will continue to use the flexibilities provided by Congress  
21 to ensure that we can enhance our competitiveness. We also  
22 understand and support what is in the President's budget  
23 with regard to changing some of the structure and ensuring  
24 that we can address issues like pay compression to ensure  
25 that we are --

1           Senator Warren: I just, I just want to underscore here  
2 though, Secretary Vazirani, I appreciate that you are doing  
3 the best with what you are given. And I am not quarreling  
4 about that.

5           I just want to get on the record that failing to pay  
6 competitive salaries makes it really challenging for DoD to  
7 build the civilian workforce that it needs in order to  
8 protect our national security. Do you agree with that?

9           Mr. Vazirani: Senator, I agree that as we are  
10 competing in a very tight labor market, we need to have a  
11 competitive pay structure.

12          Senator Warren: Good.

13          The Federal Salary Council has found that Federal  
14 employees make 27.5 percent less than their private sector  
15 counterparts. This year's budget does not even keep their  
16 salaries in line with inflation.

17          So, Secretary Vazirani, I want to work with you and the  
18 rest of DoD to build the workforce we need to keep Americans  
19 safe. But that has to start with looking at where we can  
20 save billions of dollars, and investing in enduring capacity  
21 to keep DoD at the cutting edge that we need to do to  
22 protect our national security.

23          Thank you. Ranking Member Scott.

24          Senator Scott: Thank you, Chair. You know, I do not  
25 think you are responsible for this but when I was governor

1 we had hurricanes in Florida. I am from Florida. The  
2 contract that the Army Corps had with the same companies to  
3 do debris pickup was ten times higher as what our counties  
4 and cities contracted. So we have got a lot of work to do  
5 at the Federal Government.

6 Secretary Vazirani, can you talk a little bit about the  
7 state of military recruiting. How do you think you are  
8 doing? Do you think your marketing is working? Can you  
9 just give me an update?

10 Mr. Vazirani: Senator, thank you very much. We  
11 continue to focus on recruiting from the breadth of America  
12 and ensuring that we have the talent we need to execute the  
13 National Defense Strategy. We are starting to see progress  
14 and advances in our recruiting efforts.

15 The Department is really focused on three particular  
16 efforts in this area. One is ensuring that we increase  
17 propensity, and that is really this national call to  
18 service, making a connection with young people who want to  
19 serve, making sure they understand the opportunities that  
20 military service provides.

21 The second is expanding eligibility, focusing on  
22 ensuring that those who want to serve can make through the  
23 accession process but also helping those who want to serve  
24 and maybe do not meet the standards, then raise themselves  
25 so that they can meet those standards. We are also looking

1 at the medical accession requirements, to ensure that those  
2 who are physically qualified can make it through the process  
3 and serve.

4 And then the last area is really making resource  
5 investments into our recruiting infrastructure, each of the  
6 services focused on their recruiting structure and the  
7 talent that they have in the field. And as a result we are  
8 starting to see improvement in our recruiting results.

9 Senator Scott: Thank you. So last week we had a  
10 subcommittee hearing on buying Chinese drugs. It was part  
11 of it. It is what I talked about a lot. Secretary  
12 Martinez-Lopez, I think we had a good conversation. What  
13 surprised me was that there were not any solutions. We did  
14 not come up with, okay, we know it is a problem, because why  
15 should our military be taking Chinese drugs when we know  
16 they want to kill us, and they are already killing 70,000  
17 people with fentanyl.

18 Secretary Vazirani, what are you doing to make sure  
19 -- I mean, talk about whether it is drugs, computers,  
20 whatever -- what are doing to make sure we buy nothing from  
21 China? Communist China wants to destroy our way of life.

22 Mr. Vazirani: Senator, one of the things that we are  
23 doing is we are ensuring that we are testing the supply  
24 chain and ensuring that we have the quality that we need in  
25 our pharmaceutical products. I will turn to Dr. Martinez.

1 He can talk a little bit more about what we are specifically  
2 doing to address the supply chain issues.

3 Dr. Martinez-López: Senator, since the last time we  
4 met, I pursue this very seriously because it is a national  
5 security issue. I am reaching to the HHS. They have the  
6 lead on drugs and security of the supply chain. So I am  
7 talking to the leadership of HHS for us to partner. But I  
8 am going to take the liberty of offering you an offer of  
9 help in the form of a letter to them, as well, to see if  
10 they welcome that now, and I hope they do.

11 But my message is, this is a whole-of-government. We  
12 have to take a whole-of-government approach. It is too  
13 serious of an issue for just DoD to answer. I think this is  
14 one of those where we are going to need the help of the  
15 committee, but also we are going to need the help of other  
16 departments.

17 Senator Scott: I think the chair is in the same  
18 position as I am, that this is a big issue, and so the more  
19 specific you are about what we can do. But I believe just  
20 what the DoD buys, we can have a dramatic impact and get  
21 American-made products. I mean, I think all of us are in  
22 the position that we have got to get American-made products  
23 in everything. So thank you for that.

24 Secretary Vazirani, is this something that, in your  
25 management meetings, do you talk about making sure we do not

1 buy Chinese whatever, since we know they want to destroy us?

2 Mr. Vazirani: Senator, as we look at, and particularly  
3 in the area of health care, that we are taking care of our  
4 people, we are looking at the supply chains, we are ensuring  
5 that our supply chains are stable, and we look at sourcing  
6 of products, as well.

7 Senator Scott: Okay. I think Chair Warren is in the  
8 same position as I am, that we have heard from people in our  
9 states about access to mental health services. So Secretary  
10 Martinez-López, there is a provider in Florida who says  
11 -- she does telehealth appointments. But once these  
12 servicemembers move overseas they cannot continue. That  
13 does not make sense, does it?

14 Dr. Martinez-López: Senator, that is a very good  
15 question. You remember a few days in the health care  
16 industry. The issue is not technology. The issue is a  
17 licensing process. So it is not just overseas. I mean, if  
18 a patient moves to other states you will be exactly in the  
19 same boat.

20 So the good news for us, Title 10 allows for us, if the  
21 provider is in the Military Health System, there is  
22 portability of that license. In other words, we can take  
23 care of using telemedicine either abroad or to other states.  
24 But that does not translate to a private enterprise  
25 physician working in Florida.



1           So maybe in the future, as we expand our digital health  
2 strategy and apply more telemedicine, maybe we may have to  
3 come back to you and see if there is a way that we can get  
4 help.

5           Senator Scott: I think we are both in the same  
6 position. I mean, you know the process here. To get  
7 something in the NDAA we have got to get started, right.  
8 But if there is something on that, I think all of us up here  
9 probably all care about the same -- this is a big issue,  
10 mental health services. So if you have ideas, we would love  
11 to hear them so we can try to solve the problem.

12          Dr. Martinez-López: Sir, I will talk to your staff.

13          Senator Scott: Thank you.

14          Senator Warren: Senator Hirono.

15          Senator Hirono: Thank you, Madam Chair. Secretary  
16 Vazirani, thank you very much for your recent response to my  
17 letter regarding the investigation of and accountability for  
18 major incidents like the Red Hill fuel spill that impacted  
19 the aquifer that Oahu residents rely on for their drinking  
20 water, basically, and the fire on USS Bonhomme Richard.

21          While I appreciate the work your team has put into  
22 improving and standardizing how the Department investigates,  
23 including establishing the high-level accidents category, I  
24 still strongly believe an additional higher threshold  
25 incident category is necessary for catastrophic incident and

1 to hold appropriate people accountable.

2 So I only recently learned that there was a provision  
3 in the NDAA '22 that asked for the creation of an Accident  
4 Investigation Review Board. You recently -- to me,  
5 recently, because I do not even know if my office received a  
6 copy of this report that was put out in October of 2023, and  
7 the letter that I sent to DoD was after this report had come  
8 out.

9 But I think the idea or the concern is similar in that  
10 we want to know how investigations of what I would call  
11 major incident, where \$1 billion in property damage, or we  
12 are talking about \$1 billion in costs that would arise,  
13 which is definitely Red Hill, in my letter to you I would  
14 define major incidents as the loss of lives, and in the case  
15 of the letter I said five.

16 Now, what you all came up with is not how you will  
17 proceed in an independent, basically, investigation of these  
18 kinds of major incident, but I realize that is what the NDAA  
19 '22 asked for, a review board. And what this board would  
20 do, over a 3-year time span or review, is to see whether the  
21 services appropriately investigated and held people  
22 responsible.

23 That is not what I am talking about. I am talking  
24 about in these major incidents where it would not be up to  
25 the services themselves basically to investigate themselves,

1 but that there should be an independent entity rising up to  
2 the level of the Secretary of Defense to do it.

3 So I am just wondering, having received your response,  
4 why is the Department so resistant to establishing my  
5 proposed major incidents category? Why just stick with  
6 these -- what is your category? What is the category in  
7 your report?

8 Mr. Vazirani: Senator, we are taking an approach that  
9 looks at high-interest --

10 Senator Hirono: Oh, high interest. That is about  
11 everything, because you define high interest very, very  
12 broadly, and pretty much that would be just about everything  
13 that is resulting in an investigation by any of the  
14 services. Would you agree with that?

15 Mr. Vazirani: Senator, we have taken a broad  
16 definition with high interest, when there is loss of life or  
17 there is major loss of property, or it could have high  
18 interest for our stakeholders, the Congress, the media, et  
19 cetera.

20 As we have looked at that, we do believe that whether  
21 it is a loss of one life or five, we have an obligation to  
22 ensure that we have quality, objective, timely, and  
23 transparent investigations.

24 Senator Hirono: Of course. So I am not talking about  
25 the need to investigate any incident that can be deemed high

1 interest, which is just about everything because your  
2 definition is very broad. What I am saying is that I am  
3 very interested in how the DoD investigates the kind of  
4 situations such as the Bonhomme Richard, where we lose a  
5 ship that is worth, I do not even know how many billions of  
6 dollars, goes up in flames. Red Hill, 98,000 or so people  
7 impacted by the quality of water. People had to go live  
8 with relatives, leave the state, live in hotels. And we are  
9 still going to see the aftermath because we have had to  
10 create, thankfully, the Secretary of Defense decided, at his  
11 level, to close Red Hill, which was not scheduled to be  
12 closed, by the way, not in that time frame. So I am talking  
13 about that level of what I call major incidents.

14 You know, needless to say, I am not satisfied with the  
15 Department's answer on why we should not have a mandatory,  
16 for example, separation processing policy for those found  
17 culpable in the catastrophic incidents that I am talking  
18 about. This has happened before. Former Secretary Gates  
19 relieved the Air Force Secretary and the Chief of Staff in  
20 2008, after mistakes involving the safety and security of  
21 nuclear weapons. So I know that this authority exists.

22 Let us just say that I am not looking for a report of  
23 an investigation that was done. I am looking for how these  
24 investigations will be conducted in the first instance, in  
25 what I would call major incidents. So we will have further

1 discussions about this.

2 Madam Chair, I have some other questions that I will  
3 submit for the record. Thank you very much.

4 Senator Warren: Senator Budd.

5 Senator Budd: Thank you, Chair, Ranking Member, and  
6 the panel for being here today. Mr. Vazirani, good to see  
7 you again. We had a good conversation a few weeks ago in my  
8 office, and we talked about the selection for the World  
9 Military Games of 2027. My understanding is it is down  
10 between North Carolina, my own state, and South Africa, that  
11 are being considered for potentially hosting these games.

12 So as part of the bid I am understanding that DoD needs  
13 to endorse the bid for the International Military Sports  
14 Council, and that armed forces sports falls under your  
15 responsibility. Am I correct so far?

16 Mr. Vazirani: Senator, that is correct.

17 Senator Budd: Have you received the North Carolina  
18 proposal for this?

19 Mr. Vazirani: Senator, I understand that that proposal  
20 has come in to the P&R office.

21 Senator Budd: Well, I think that we are strategically  
22 suited to host World Military Games. We have got the  
23 venues, the transportation, the colleges to do this. Do you  
24 know the status of this proposal?

25 Mr. Vazirani: Senator, I understand that that proposal

1 came in earlier this week, and the team is starting to  
2 review that. I am looking forward to seeing the  
3 recommendation coming from the team. And Senator, I commit  
4 to ensuring that we pass that recommendation forward.

5 Senator Budd: Thank you. I hope that DoD, yourself,  
6 would give this all the due consideration, as it is between  
7 the United States and another country, South Africa at this  
8 point. So, I mean, what does it say to our military  
9 athletes and communities that we do not even attempt to  
10 secure the games? So thank you for your best effort there  
11 and forwarding this along.

12 Mr. Vazirani, last year's NDAA, it included a provision  
13 that required the Secretary of Defense to issue regulations  
14 requiring military accessions and promotions to be, and I  
15 quote, "be based on individual merit and demonstrated  
16 performance," end quote.

17 Here is kind of the question behind that. The  
18 Department informed the committee staff, right here, that it  
19 would not be issuing any new or updated regulations, even  
20 though there was new law in the NDAA about merit and  
21 performance. So why didn't the Department of Defense update  
22 the guidance as a result of last year's legislation?

23 Mr. Vazirani: Senator, I think you are referring to  
24 the MERIT Act --

25 Senator Budd: Yes.

1 Mr. Vazirani: -- and Senator, the Department has  
2 determined that we are in compliance with the MERIT Act and  
3 therefore did not need to issue new policy.

4 Senator Budd: You know, that is my concern is it was  
5 Senator Wicker's bill, the MERIT Act, and it would have, for  
6 the first time, prohibited consideration of race in all DoD  
7 personnel actions. So I have been, and continue to be  
8 concerned that the DoD is pushing race as a factor for  
9 service academy admissions and officer promotions. And I  
10 hope that perhaps the guidance and regulations would align  
11 with the MERIT Act that passed as law.

12 So thank you. I yield back.

13 Senator Warren: Thank you, Senator Budd.

14 Ms. Foster, I understand now that we have an integrated  
15 primary prevention workforce, and that it was designed to  
16 try to deal with a lot of interpersonal issues of sexual  
17 assault in the military, child abuse, other kinds of issues,  
18 and that you have been trying to hire nationwide for this.  
19 Can you just give us an update on where you are, what kind  
20 of challenges you faced, and what you see over a sort of  
21 near-term horizon for this, for this workforce?

22 Ms. Foster: Senator, absolutely. Thank you for the  
23 question. The Integrated Primary Prevention Workforce is a  
24 key focus of ours in preventing harmful behaviors at the  
25 Department of Defense. What I can tell you is that the

1 Department has hired over 1,000 of those personnel. Our  
2 goal is to have in place 2,500 personnel across the globe,  
3 at every installation across the world. We have been really  
4 focused on making sure that this is a truly professional  
5 workforce. So that means that we have to ensure that this  
6 workforce receives adequate training to do their difficult  
7 work. One of the things that we have done is created a  
8 first-of-its-kind prevention credential. And we are in the  
9 process of ensuring that those personnel that we have hired  
10 are getting that credential and getting that appropriate  
11 training.

12 Senator Warren: I appreciate the update.

13 So, another issue I would like to talk about, and I  
14 said I would talk about at the beginning, is about housing.  
15 Families all across this country, military and non-military,  
16 are struggling because of our nation's housing crisis, but  
17 this is hitting the military really hard. Nearly two-thirds  
18 of servicemembers live off base. Seventy-three percent of  
19 those troops are paying well over \$200 a month in out-of-  
20 pocket housing costs, despite the military providing them a  
21 basic housing allowance that, allegedly, covers their  
22 housing needs.

23 In Florida, a housing shortage led to a shortage of air  
24 traffic controllers at a base in Key West when sailors  
25 refused their assignments to the base because of its



1 reputation for housing issues. Shortages have also forced  
2 some Navy sailors, who served on tour for months, to live on  
3 ships when they return home because there is no place on  
4 land for them to live.

5 Secretary Vazirani, when there is not enough housing to  
6 go around, how does that affect military readiness and  
7 personnel?

8 Mr. Vazirani: Senator, quality of housing certainly  
9 impacts quality of service and quality of life. And the  
10 quality of life for a military family affects military  
11 family readiness and overall readiness.

12 Senator Warren: So in fiscal year 2019, Congress  
13 created a pilot program called the Defense Community  
14 Infrastructure Program, DCIP, to help state and local  
15 governments improve, quote, "deficiencies in community  
16 infrastructures supportive of a military installation." In  
17 other words, we can spend money to help out in the community  
18 if it would help our military base.

19 Now, DCIP has been so successful that Congress made  
20 this program permanent in last year's NDAA. And in the last  
21 year alone, these grants helped to replace aging stormwater  
22 infrastructure in the Port of Alaska and Norfolk, Virginia,  
23 to construct a new fire station in Florida, and create a  
24 multi-agency emergency command center in Louisiana.

25 Secretary Vazirani, have DCIP investments in off-base

1 community infrastructure paid off for servicemembers and  
2 their families, in your opinion?

3 Mr. Vazirani: Senator, I think the DCIP program has  
4 been an effective program in investing in those communities  
5 where there are significant numbers of military.

6 Senator Warren: And investing in the communities in a  
7 way that benefits the military. This is not just, "you got  
8 lucky and won the lottery, you have a military base." It is  
9 that it actually helps the people who are serving on base,  
10 is that right? I just want to make sure I have got this  
11 right.

12 Mr. Vazirani: Senator, that is correct.

13 Senator Warren: And the reason I want to push on this  
14 issue is because I want to build on the success of DCIP.  
15 According to a recent survey, shortages in off-base housing  
16 is one of the top issues facing servicemembers and their  
17 families. Expanding DCIP to prioritize projects that will  
18 increase the housing supply for families who cannot live on  
19 base, or who do not want to live on base, would be a good  
20 first step.

21 So, Secretary Vazirani, would more funding for off-base  
22 communities to build more housing to improve the readiness  
23 and quality of life for servicemembers and their families?

24 Mr. Vazirani: Senator, access to affordable housing  
25 certainly will improve the quality of life for military

1 families. We are very focused on that. As we look at, for  
2 example, the BAH, we evaluate that yearly, we look at what  
3 is available housing, we look at the quality of the housing  
4 level. We focus on areas where there is high quality  
5 housing, where there is low crime. And we also look at  
6 where our military families are currently living as we set  
7 those BAH rates.

8 Senator Warren: Good. I appreciate that.

9 I want to work with Senator Scott and other members of  
10 this committee to see if we can't get more help through the  
11 DCIP program.

12 You know, there is a lot we need to do to improve  
13 current military housing, from getting rid of mold and  
14 abusive non-disclosure agreements, to fixing up conditions  
15 in barracks. And I am going to be pushing hard to do that  
16 in this year's NDAA, and I know I am going to get a lot of  
17 help here.

18 But at the end of the day, there is just no substitute  
19 for more housing. Congress should build on the success of  
20 the DCIP program by expanding DCIP to help tackle one of the  
21 worst problems we are facing, and that is the housing  
22 shortage for our military personnel.

23 So, thank you. Senator Blumenthal. Is that right.  
24 Oh, sorry. Senator Scott. You are next. No, go ahead.  
25 You are next. My fault. Senator Scott.

1 Senator Scott: Sure. Okay. Thank you, Chair.

2 Mr. Vazirani, can you talk a little bit about, the  
3 chairwoman brought up the childcare system. It is my  
4 understanding that the Department has completed a detailed  
5 study on how to improve the recruitment and retention of  
6 childcare providers. Can you talk about those  
7 recommendations, what you have implemented, and what you  
8 have decided not to implement, or what you are in the  
9 process of implementing?

10 Mr. Vazirani: Senator Scott, thank you. Childcare is  
11 a key enabler of readiness. It is an enabler of military  
12 spouse employment. So have placed some significant  
13 investments in our childcare workforce and in our capacity.  
14 In the President's budgets there is significant investment  
15 in building capacity in childcare centers, and we have made  
16 investments, as well, in the childcare workforce and  
17 restructuring that workforce so that we can recruit and  
18 retain that workforce.

19 I will turn to Secretary Keohane, and he can give you a  
20 little bit more detail on that plan.

21 Mr. Keohane: Thank you, sir. Senator, with 160,000  
22 children that go through the Childcare Center every year we  
23 certainly know that we, as the Department, are the largest  
24 childcare provider in the nation, employer provided.

25 We have done a number of things to improve the

1 programs. One of the things that we are working on,  
2 certainly as Secretary Vazirani mentioned, is compensation.  
3 This is all part of the President's recommendation for his  
4 2025 budget. Additionally, that would allow us to be more  
5 competitive with our civilian counterparts, or our public  
6 counterparts, as well as the ability to hire new positions,  
7 for example, lead educator position, which would allow our  
8 childcare workers that want to progress through the system  
9 to move up to management if they so decide to do so.

10 Senator Scott: When I was governor of Florida, we had  
11 21 military bases and 3 unified commands, and so I met with  
12 all the base commanders about every 120 days. And we did  
13 not focus on Federal issues. We focused on state issues.  
14 But childcare is a state issue, right. I mean, all this  
15 stuff that impacted the servicemembers' decision if they  
16 wanted to serve in Florida was a big deal to me because I  
17 wanted our military bases to be able to fulfill their  
18 mission.

19 Do you all do that? Do you guys meet with the base  
20 commanders, state by state, and see what -- because in my  
21 state, what I did is I brought in all of the agency heads.  
22 So if the base commander says, "I am having a problem with  
23 encroachment" or "I am having a problem with health care,"  
24 blah-blah-blah, whatever it was, then my goal was by the  
25 time of the next meeting we solved that. Do you do anything

1 like that, state by state?

2 Mr. Vazirani: Senator, we engage with the military  
3 services and at the installation level and then the  
4 installation commanders. And I think our colleagues from  
5 the services can talk about what the installation commanders  
6 do to engage their local community.

7 I think in addition to the things that Secretary  
8 Keohane outlined around building capacity and capability,  
9 the other thing that we have been very focused on is  
10 ensuring affordability of childcare. And so we have made  
11 change to our childcare rates so that our lower earners are  
12 actually paying an equitable amount of their income.

13 We have also implemented dependent care flexible  
14 spending accounts, which will allow active duty  
15 servicemembers and their families to use pretax dollars to  
16 pay for their childcare.

17 Senator Scott: You know, another thing we did was we  
18 tried to find best practices for everything we were doing  
19 with the military, and then we put out a pamphlet to show  
20 that we were hopefully better than everybody else. Not  
21 always, right. It never works out that way.

22 Have you done anything like that, where you can show,  
23 you know, every state that you have military, how the state  
24 is doing? Because the state could be part of this. The  
25 state regulations have an impact. State reimbursement has

1 an impact. All of these things. Because you are not going  
2 to be able to provide all of the childcare yourself, right.  
3 The Department Secretary is going to have to do some of it.  
4 Have you gone and looked at what the states are doing and  
5 find out the states that are not helpful and states that are  
6 more helpful, and put that out there?

7 Mr. Vazirani: Senator, an area that we have even  
8 engaged with the states is in implementing our Military  
9 Child Care in Your Neighborhood Plus program. That is  
10 really focused on creating more programs that are civilian  
11 programs that we can then use our fee assistance, while  
12 those programs are focused on ensuring that they meet the  
13 quality standards. So that is one of the ways that we have  
14 been engaging with the states.

15 Senator Scott: Thank you. If we have more time I have  
16 another question.

17 Senator Warren: You are welcome to it now, if you  
18 want.

19 Senator Scott: Secretary Martinez-Lopez, are you  
20 overall responsible for TRICARE?

21 Dr. Martinez-López: Yes, Senator.

22 Senator Scott: Okay. How do you think it is doing?  
23 What are you hearing? And what sort of measurement do you  
24 do in the TRICARE program to understand what is people's  
25 perception? Because back when I was in the hospital

1 business we bid on TRICARE contract. But I can just say, we  
2 did not get any of the contracts because you really need to  
3 be on the insurance side of it. But are you finding  
4 differences, depending on where they are in the country?

5 Dr. Martinez-López: Sir, I mean, it is one of the  
6 largest health care insurances in the country, very complex  
7 to regions. We just renegotiated the contracts. Hopefully  
8 they will come in line next year. We look at access. We  
9 look at the satisfaction of the patient, just like the rest  
10 of the industry.

11 Access is an issue for us all along because we thought  
12 that the network outside everywhere was going to be very  
13 robust, and now we are finding out that not to be true. You  
14 know, there are parts of the country where the network is  
15 not that robust, and may have to come out with a different  
16 way to address the patients' needs. Telemedicine is one of  
17 those ways that we need to leverage.

18 So yes, sir, we are looking at the feedback from the  
19 patients. We are learning. I hope the new generation  
20 contracts will be more on target. In the old days, for  
21 example, the contractor would just have network names, and  
22 all these doctors that were in the network. Well, it did  
23 not do anything to me as a patient because I would keep  
24 calling and I could not get an appointment. So the new  
25 contract is not about names. The new contract is about



1 availability of appointments for our patient.

2 So we are learning. We are making it better. It is  
3 not online yet. It is going to take us a year to get there.  
4 But I am very optimistic that we are moving in the right  
5 direction.

6 Senator Scott: Thank you.

7 Senator Warren: Senator Blumenthal.

8 Senator Blumenthal: Thank you, Madam Chair. I want to  
9 come back to the recruiting issue. I understand Senator  
10 Scott raised it. Thank you, Secretary Vazirani, for coming  
11 to see us recently. Maybe you could give us an update on  
12 how recruiting is going.

13 Mr. Vazirani: Senator, we have focused heavily on the  
14 recruiting challenges. The services are making good  
15 progress. We have been focused in three particular areas.  
16 One is increasing propensity. So that is driving a greater  
17 connection with young people who have an interest in  
18 serving. Oftentimes we find that young people do not know  
19 what the opportunities are in military service.

20 Senator Blumenthal: So let me ask you, and I apologize  
21 for interrupting but we all have limited time. What do the  
22 numbers look like for this year?

23 Mr. Vazirani: Senator, we are seeing that the Marine  
24 Corps, the Air Force, and the Space Force on the active  
25 component are meeting their goals. The Army is doing better

1 than they had been year-over-year. The Navy is still  
2 falling short of their goals. And the Reserve component,  
3 three of the elements of the Reserve component are also  
4 meeting their goals.

5 Senator Blumenthal: So it looks like the Marine Corps,  
6 Space Force, and Cyber will meet their goals --

7 Mr. Vazirani: Marine Corps, Air Force, and Space  
8 Force.

9 Senator Blumenthal: But the Army is falling short and  
10 the Navy is shorter?

11 Mr. Vazirani: The Army is doing significantly better  
12 than they had last year, and is just short of goal. I think  
13 that our service components can talk a little bit more, but  
14 I think they are cautiously optimistic that they may be able  
15 to meet goal. The Navy still has some work to do.

16 Senator Blumenthal: When we last spoke, one of the  
17 topics that Senator Sullivan and I were working on was  
18 access to high schools, if you recall, and I think the same  
19 question applies to colleges and universities. Are you  
20 finding any progress on those efforts?

21 Mr. Vazirani: Senator, we are seeing improved access  
22 certainly after COVID. But the level of access that we have  
23 is that we are getting the required level of access, not  
24 necessarily the desired level of access. Certainly if we  
25 had a greater frequency and more in-depth opportunity to

1 engage with young people, not only in the high schools but  
2 in college, or those maybe who are no longer in college, we  
3 think that would give us greater opportunity.

4 We have submitted a legislative proposal to that effect  
5 to help us increase that level of access. So that would  
6 bring us up to a minimum, while we would at least be  
7 comparable with what the high schools are offering to other  
8 employers, or to colleges, at least a minimum of four times  
9 per year. And it would also allow us to have access to  
10 lists from colleges or universities, particularly for those  
11 students who may have left the college or university. And  
12 this would give us an opportunity to present them with  
13 options that the military can provide.

14 Senator Blumenthal: Do you find resistance on the part  
15 of some high schools or school boards?

16 Mr. Vazirani: Senator, I think we find that there are  
17 not any high schools or school boards that are not meeting  
18 that minimum requirement, but there are schools and school  
19 districts that are only providing the minimum requirement,  
20 and we would appreciate greater access.

21 Senator Blumenthal: Is there anything we can do to  
22 help with that effort?

23 Mr. Vazirani: Senator, I think that proposal that we  
24 have submitted, I think if the Personnel Subcommittee were  
25 to look at that and consider that, that would be helpful to

1 us.

2 Senator Blumenthal: I want to ask you just very  
3 briefly about the Xavier Sandor Act, anyone who would like  
4 to respond. As you may know, I and others led the passage  
5 of a bill named after a sailor, Xavier Sandor, who died by  
6 suicide on the USS George Washington. He was a native of  
7 Connecticut. He took his own life 2 years after living in  
8 really abysmal conditions on a ship that was in for  
9 maintenance. And there was noise. There was no air  
10 conditioning. There were no really good facilities. This  
11 kind of problem evidently was fairly common among ships that  
12 were doing maintenance over apparently a fairly lengthy  
13 period of time, and that is fairly common.

14 Do you know how many sailors assigned to ships in long-  
15 term maintenance billets have been authorized to live off  
16 post since December of last year when we passed this  
17 measure, which authorized that kind of off-post billet? Any  
18 of you. Thank you.

19 Mr. Vazirani: Senator, I do not have that information.  
20 I will take that question for the record.

21 Senator Blumenthal: Thank you. Thank you all.

22 Senator Warren: Senator Sullivan.

23 Senator Sullivan: Thank you, Madam Chair. Mr.  
24 Secretary, I want to follow up on the work that Senator  
25 Blumenthal and I, and you, have been doing on recruiting. I

1 think it is a really important issue. And look, it should  
2 not be controversial if a university or an American high  
3 school has misguided administrators who say, "Hey, we don't  
4 want the military around our students." It is a disservice  
5 to students to give them access and understanding. It is a  
6 disservice to our nation.

7 So I think we need to be a little bit more forward  
8 leaning and hopefully the legislative language that you are  
9 talking about will have some things.

10 Let me give you one example. You mentioned minimal  
11 requirement. In a hearing on this committee last year, one  
12 of the Air Force senior officers described what you called  
13 "minimal requirement." They called it "suboptimal access,"  
14 and here is how he described it. "An example experienced by  
15 many Air Force recruiters is a school that allows a  
16 lunchroom setup during non-optimal hours" -- so not during  
17 lunch -- "typically displaced into a section of the  
18 lunchroom away from the students, and told by school  
19 authorities that they are not to engage students unless the  
20 students engage them first," and they are provided this  
21 access once or twice a year. And that school supposedly  
22 meets the standard. Okay, whatever the standard is, that  
23 should not be the standard.

24 That school, that example, we should, in my view,  
25 legislate that that is not acceptable. So if you can work

1 with us -- do you think that is acceptable, the way that Air  
2 Force recruiter described it in this committee last year?

3 Mr. Vazirani: Senator, I would agree that that is  
4 suboptimal.

5 Senator Sullivan: That is suboptimal. But that is  
6 legal, is it not?

7 Mr. Vazirani: Senator, that is correct. That would  
8 meet the definition of required access, and that is why we  
9 are coming forward and asking --

10 Senator Sullivan: Yeah. So I think it would be really  
11 important that we do this work to fix that. I mean, that is  
12 just not acceptable, and shame on those schools for doing  
13 that. But maybe they are led by people who are misguided,  
14 do not know a lot about the military, maybe had a bad  
15 experience with the military, so they are not providing.

16 So I think one of the things that we can do here, in  
17 this NDAA, is address that. And we want to work with you on  
18 that, so thanks.

19 Let me turn to, Mr. Secretary, you and Dr. Martinez-  
20 Lopez, the MHS GENESIS system is getting all kinds of bad  
21 press, all kinds of mentions. We had a full committee with  
22 the Secretary, and the chairman came up. Senator Cotton was  
23 pressing them on that. It does seem to be something that  
24 kind of digs deep, and maybe too deep, if you have a young  
25 -- you know, I have heard of a story, well, a real-life

1 story, of a young woman, really good athlete. She had taken  
2 antidepressants like when she was 12, 13. And the Air Force  
3 was telling her, "Hey, sorry. We don't want you." A  
4 straight A student, you know, top university. We don't want  
5 you -- why?

6 And it is kind of this Catch-22. Once you are in the  
7 military we want to take care of servicemembers' mental  
8 health, but right now there are a lot of services that say  
9 if you had a mental health issue when you were 12, you are  
10 disqualified.

11 So I think that needs to be fixed, as well, because  
12 think about that young girl. She has either got to lie and  
13 say, "No, I never had a problem," or if she tells the truth  
14 then she does not get accepted.

15 What are we doing on the MHS GENESIS health records,  
16 and do you believe it has been a challenge to our recruiting  
17 because it is bringing up things that in my view probably  
18 are not that relevant to whether you want to serve your  
19 country as a 20-year-old, when you were 13 and you took  
20 antidepressants.

21 Mr. Vazirani: Senator, as we think about accessing  
22 people into the military, young people into the military, it  
23 is important that we have a good understanding of their  
24 health, for two purposes. One is we know that they are  
25 physically qualified to be able to make it through that

1 basic military training, which is very rigorous, and then  
2 through that first contract period and to ensure that they  
3 are deployable.

4 What that MHS GENESIS system has done for us is given  
5 us that ability through the health information exchange to  
6 have that rich history. So it is providing us with --

7 Senator Sullivan: You call it rich history. Some  
8 might call it probing, deeply irrelevant. But keep going.

9 Mr. Vazirani: I think having that data informs us.  
10 What it is also allowing us to do is to get a better  
11 understanding of where we can adjust our accession  
12 standards. So we have the medical accession review pilot,  
13 which is allowing us, rather than going back and looking for  
14 a complete history, you can go back and look 1, 3 or 5  
15 years, or through 7 years.

16 And so, for example, in the area of attention deficit  
17 and hyperactivity disorder, we have been able to adjust that  
18 standard, so now we only have a one-year lookback period if  
19 an individual is stable and off medication.

20 So having that history is allowing us to use the  
21 science to be able to adjust the standards.

22 Senator Sullivan: If you could submit the final answer  
23 to that for the record, and particularly if there is no  
24 -- you do not see any issues with MHS GENESIS. It is a  
25 getting a lot of criticism, part of the problem, on



1 recruiting. But if you can submit that for the record.

2 Madam Chair, I just have one really quick final  
3 question for the Secretary. I know I am out of time, but it  
4 is an important one, and maybe you could submit it for the  
5 record, Mr. Secretary.

6 As you indicate in your testimony, dependent education  
7 is a top priority for servicemembers as they are assigned to  
8 duty stations all over the world. Last month, at a base in  
9 Alaska that is really growing -- this is Eielson Air Force  
10 Base. We now have two squadrons of F-35s there, and tankers  
11 that are going to be stationed there -- the middle school,  
12 high school at Eielson Air Force Base had to close. One of  
13 the main reasons was funding.

14 My question, and maybe you can submit it to me for the  
15 record, how does the Department determine DoD impact aid and  
16 how is that distributed to states? Once it is distributed  
17 to states, is there any way to guarantee that it goes to  
18 schools that directly serve the base populations? And is  
19 there anything you can do on this Eielson Air Force Base  
20 closure issue that the Air Force can look into that?

21 And maybe, Madam Chair, if we can take that for the  
22 record, but try to get that back to us soon.

23 Mr. Vazirani: Senator, I would be happy to take that  
24 for the record.

25 Senator Sullivan: Great. Thank you, Madam Chair.

1 Senator Warren: Thank you. Senator Duckworth.

2 Senator Duckworth: Thank you, Madam Chair, and good  
3 afternoon to our witnesses.

4 Mr. Vazirani, following our conversation during your  
5 visit to my office last week, I want to reiterate my  
6 expectation study regarding special and incentive pays  
7 should be accelerated. I do not want to be slow-rolled, and  
8 the timeline for the study to take potentially another year  
9 is unacceptable to me, especially since this issue has  
10 already been studied within the last 2 years.

11 It has been 3 years since I first introduced  
12 legislation to make sure that Reserve and National Guard  
13 servicemembers are fairly compensated for maintaining  
14 critical skills and qualifications needed to accomplish  
15 their jobs.

16 Now I do not know why my colleague from Alaska would  
17 voluntarily jump out of a perfectly good aircraft, but if he  
18 voluntarily jumps out of an aircraft three time in one month  
19 as a reservist, he should get the same pay as an active duty  
20 person who jumps out of an aircraft three times in the same  
21 month, in terms of incentive pay.

22 At present, our servicemembers in the Reserve and Guard  
23 only receive a fraction of what their active duty  
24 counterparts are paid in special and incentive pay to  
25 maintain the same skills. My update in the fiscal year 2024

1 NDAA requires the service secretaries to go back and  
2 individually review each type of special incentive pay and  
3 certify certain types to be paid equally to members of the  
4 active and reserve components if those special and incentive  
5 pays are intended to encourage reservists to maintain a  
6 skill or proficiency identical -- identical -- to that  
7 required of active component members, or to compensate them  
8 for identical exposure to hazards or risks, and if doing so  
9 will not negatively impact retention.

10 Last year's update to the NDAA 2024 was meant to  
11 clarify Congress' intent and provide flexibility. It was  
12 not intended to further delay implementation and slow-roll  
13 Congress. You need to fix this disparity between active  
14 duty and reserve components now.

15 During our meeting last week, you mentioned that the  
16 RAND study regarding special and incentive pays will not be  
17 completed until the end of this year or early next year.  
18 This is unacceptable.

19 Can you commit to working with me to ensure that this  
20 study is prioritized and at least some of the findings be  
21 completed in the next 90 days so our nation's Reserve and  
22 National Guard servicemembers receive the incentive and  
23 special pay that they deserve and that Congress intended for  
24 them to receive?

25 Mr. Vazirani: Senator, I appreciate the conversation

1 that we had, and certainly value the contributions of the  
2 Reserve component as part of the total force.

3 We have prioritized the study. We are working through  
4 that. I can commit that within 90 days to come and provide  
5 an update on where we are on the study. I am not sure if  
6 there will be element that will be completed in 90 days, but  
7 I certainly will provide you an update on where we are.

8 I think as we are conducting that study we are  
9 developing a framework that will allow us to understand  
10 -- and the Congress did give us the opportunity to implement  
11 those special incentive pays in a targeted manner. And so  
12 the study will help us understand whether or not we meet the  
13 objectives, the retention or recruiting objectives by  
14 specialty or type of pay, and that is the intent of the  
15 study.

16 Senator Duckworth: What clarification do you need to  
17 say that a National Guardsman or Reserve force's paratrooper  
18 who jumps out of an aircraft the same number of times in a  
19 month as an active duty troop should get the same jump pay  
20 as an active duty troop? What further study do you need?

21 Mr. Vazirani: Senator, the initial study that we did  
22 was to certify for the '22 NDAA whether or not there would  
23 be impacts to the active component. The study that we are  
24 doing now is to understand the impacts those will have on  
25 the recruiting or retention objectives in the Reserve

1 component.

2 Senator Duckworth: You are slow-rolling me, and it is  
3 not acceptable.

4 Mr. Vazirani: Senator, I promise you we are not slow-  
5 rolling. We are really trying to be deliberate. It is a  
6 complex issue. We want to do it in a deliberate and  
7 thorough manner. There are a number of different pays that  
8 can be affected, and we want to make sure that we are doing  
9 this in the correct way.

10 Senator Duckworth: You can start with key ones that  
11 are very clear. I will tell you that the guy or gal who is  
12 jumping out of that aircraft, it is very clear to him, and  
13 it is pretty simple.

14 Mr. Vazirani: Senator --

15 Senator Duckworth: And to them you are slow-rolling.

16 Now I understand that last year's NDAA included report  
17 language requiring DoD to establish a framework for special  
18 and incentive pay, which was the trigger for the RAND  
19 report. I will note that this framework is not required.  
20 It is not required in order to certify special and incentive  
21 pays in line with the provisions that I mentioned before.  
22 Don't use it as a way to slow-roll. That framework is not  
23 required. You can actually start certifying some of those  
24 skills and those specialties.

25 So since DoD has decided to enter into an agreement

1 with RAND to produce this framework, can you explain and  
2 clarify why a new study could take more than a year to  
3 deliver when this issue has already been studied by RAND  
4 within the last 24 months?

5 Mr. Vazirani: Senator, the study that was conducted  
6 for the '22 NDAA was to understand if there were impacts to  
7 the active component. The study that we are conducting now  
8 is to understand if we are meeting the objectives, the  
9 retention, the recruitment objectives for the Reserve  
10 component, and looking at it by specific pay, as you pointed  
11 out. And it gives us then the opportunity to prioritize  
12 certain pays, whether it is aviation pay, jump pay, dive  
13 pay, special operations pay.

14 Senator Duckworth: So if you are waiting for this  
15 study, what is your timeline for developing an actual  
16 implementation plan, and if you have a working group set up  
17 to address this issue, what steps will you take to think  
18 through the issues of implementation now in order to  
19 expedite this entire process?

20 Mr. Vazirani: Senator, we are working with our  
21 colleagues in the military departments. Once we have this  
22 framework that will allow for and inform a very robust  
23 discussion, once we carry out that discussion and understand  
24 what decisions will be made, that is how we will proceed.

25 Given the complexity of this issue, I cannot commit to

1 a particular timeline on that, but I can commit to ensuring  
2 that we inform you of those decisions, when the framework is  
3 completed and as we make decisions along the way.

4 Senator Duckworth: So you have no timeline. You do  
5 not know when the RAND study is going to be done, maybe this  
6 year, maybe next year, for a study that was already done.  
7 And yet you have the authority to start making decisions on  
8 some of the special incentive pay. I mean this is all,  
9 what, and you are saying you are not slow-rolling. It seems  
10 to me like you are doing this on purpose so that you do not  
11 have to pay these troops, especially the ones that have very  
12 clear, simple requirements that are exactly the same as  
13 active duty troops.

14 Madam Chair, I have an additional question that I am  
15 going to ask to be entered in the record on foreign medical  
16 facilities and medical readiness in the Indo-Pacific region.

17 Senator Warren: Without objection.

18 Senator Duckworth: Thank you, Madam Chair.

19 Senator Warren: Senator Hirono.

20 Senator Hirono: Thank you very much, Madam Chair.

21 Secretary Vazirani, last month I joined several of my  
22 colleagues on a letter asking the Department to address  
23 recent news reports regarding failures to appropriately  
24 respond to childcare abuse at military Child Development  
25 Centers. My office just received your response this morning

1 regarding this situation.

2 Can you provide an update, briefly, on this issue, and  
3 confirm that the Department has referred this matter to the  
4 DoD IG, that your office is conducting its own review of the  
5 applicable service policies to ensure consistent and  
6 effective oversight of the CDCs? With 160,000 children in  
7 your CDCs it is pretty important that they be safe. Can you  
8 confirm?

9 Mr. Vazirani: Senator, we take the safety of those  
10 children that we have under our care very seriously. When  
11 the article did come out I did refer this to the inspector  
12 general, so I can confirm that that has been submitted to  
13 the inspector general. I also directed our team to work  
14 with the military departments to understand and evaluate our  
15 policies and understand if there is ambiguity and where that  
16 needs to be resolved.

17 I can turn to Mr. Keohane to give you an update on  
18 where we are in addressing those policies.

19 Senator Hirono: And these reviews will be made  
20 available to our committee.

21 Mr. Vazirani: Senator, as we go through those reviews  
22 and as we adjust policies, as necessary, I certainly commit  
23 to working with your staff --

24 Senator Hirono: Thank you.

25 Mr. Vazirani: -- and the committee on the direction



1 that we will go.

2 Senator Hirono: So Dr. Martinez-Lopez, in October  
3 2023, my colleagues and I led a letter regarding  
4 servicemembers' access and coverage to Opill, the first FDA-  
5 approved oral contraceptive available without a  
6 prescription. The Defense Health Agency's Pharmacy and  
7 Therapeutics Committee ruled that it would cover Opill in  
8 its uniform formulary if it was cost effective, which it has  
9 since been deemed. And, of course, with the chaos following  
10 the Dobbs decision, it is very important that our  
11 servicemembers have access to reproductive care including  
12 contraception.

13 So while we appreciate that childcare now covers Opill,  
14 does the Department require servicemembers to obtain a  
15 prescription?

16 Dr. Martinez-López: Senator, thank you for the  
17 question. I will take it for the record. I do not know the  
18 answer, in particular, to that one.

19 Senator Hirono: Well, the FDA has said that this is  
20 safe without a prescription, so if the Department is saying  
21 that a prescription is required, I would say that you should  
22 eliminate that requirement.

23 Dr. Martinez-López: I understand, ma'am.

24 Senator Hirono: And will DoD direct the military  
25 service exchanges to stock the over-the-counter

1 contraceptive without burdensome restrictions or delays?

2 Dr. Martinez-López: Ma'am, right now we are very proud  
3 that 130 of our MTFs, medical treatment facilities, offer  
4 walk-in contraceptive clinics and reproductive health  
5 clinics. So that talks about our commitment to make  
6 possible what you are asking. So I do not know the details,  
7 the specifics of this particular drug and about the  
8 requirements of the prescription, but I can tell you about  
9 our commitment to make sure all our servicemembers get the  
10 reproductive health care they need.

11 Senator Hirono: Yep. This is really important, of  
12 course, because as I said, with the chaos following the  
13 Dobbs decision we have servicemembers who are deployed to  
14 places where they are not going to be able to receive the  
15 reproductive services that they deserve. And you have  
16 situations where they may be in states where unless they are  
17 practically on death's door they will not receive emergency  
18 care.

19 So we need to make sure that whatever they can have  
20 access to, i.e., oral contraceptives, that they have that  
21 access.

22 For you again, I applaud the Department of Defense's  
23 development of walk-in contraceptive clinics and removal of  
24 contraceptive care co-pays. However, there was a provision  
25 in the 2016 NDAA that all armed services members must

1 receive comprehensive contraception counseling at all  
2 military treatment facilities at least once every year. A  
3 2022 RAND report found that only 25 percent of active duty  
4 service women received counseling and only 18 percent of  
5 active duty service women received counseling from a  
6 military health system provider prior to deployment.

7 Do you have any updates on the implementation of the  
8 congressional mandate in the 2016 NDAA for all  
9 servicemembers to receive comprehensive contraceptive  
10 counseling at least once a year and prior to deployment?  
11 Again, especially important with the chaos following the  
12 Dobbs decision.

13 Dr. Martinez-López: Senator, we committed again to  
14 provide the best care to all our servicemembers. The  
15 decision or when or how to have a family is unique to every  
16 servicemember, so we owe them that. I owe you, for the  
17 record, the actual number of the implementation, but I can  
18 tell you our commitment to make sure that they do receive  
19 that counseling as we move forward.

20 Senator Hirono: Yes. This has got to be an  
21 intentional commitment. So yes, I will check back with you  
22 as to whether or not we are increasing this percentage,  
23 because obviously the majority of your female servicemembers  
24 are not getting this kind of information.

25 Thank you, Madam Chair.

1 Senator Warren: Thank you, Senator Hirono.

2 I want to thank our panel for being with us. I  
3 appreciate it. There may be additional questions that will  
4 come in, and we will be sure to get those to you.

5 And with that I will excuse you and ask the second  
6 panel to come up.

7 Mr. Vazirani: Thank you, Senator.

8 Senator Warren: Thank you.

9 [Pause.]

10 Senator Warren: The second panel will consist of the  
11 personnel leaders for the military services. Lieutenant  
12 General Douglas F. Stitt, Deputy Chief of Staff for  
13 Personnel for the Army. General Stitt, I understand you are  
14 retiring soon, and this will be your last hearing before  
15 this committee. Let me say from both of us, thank you for  
16 your service.

17 Vice Admiral Rick Cheeseman, Deputy Chief of Naval  
18 Operations for Personnel, Manpower, and Training. Welcome.

19 Lieutenant General James F. Glynn, Deputy Commandant,  
20 Manpower and Reserve Affairs.

21 Lieutenant General Caroline Miller, Deputy Chief of  
22 Staff for Manpower, Personnel, and Services for the Air  
23 Force.

24 And Ms. Kate Kelley, Deputy Chief of Space Operations  
25 for Human Capital.

1           So thank you all for being here, and we will hear from  
2 each of you, starting with Lieutenant General Stitt.

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1           STATEMENT OF LIEUTENANT GENERAL DOUGLAS F. STITT, USA,  
2 DEPUTY CHIEF OF STAFF FOR PERSONNEL, G-1, UNITED STATES ARMY

3           General Stitt: Good afternoon, Chair Warren, Ranking  
4 Member Scott, distinguished members of this committee.

5 Thank you for the opportunity to appear before you on behalf  
6 of the soldiers of the United States Army. I submitted a  
7 statement for the record, and want to highlight a few points  
8 from it now.

9           The United States Army is amidst a fundamental  
10 transformation. We are adapting and changing our  
11 capabilities, force structure, and accessions enterprise.  
12 These collective efforts combine to enable ready combat  
13 formations while ensuring the care of our people and their  
14 quality of life is commensurate with their service.

15           The Army's senior leadership directed necessary changes  
16 to improve the effectiveness of our accessions formation in  
17 the face of a challenging recruiting environment. These  
18 transformative efforts include enhancements of our  
19 recruiting workforce, engaging across the totality of the  
20 labor market, and a streamlined reporting structure.  
21 Compared to the same point last year, we are ahead in our  
22 accessions mission, and the Army is on pace to meet its  
23 targeted fiscal year 2024 end strength of 445,000.

24           The Army remains a great place to serve, as  
25 demonstrated by our historically high retention rates. In

1 fiscal year 2023, we achieved 102 percent of our retention  
2 mission, and we are on glide path to exceed our retention  
3 mission again in 2024.

4 We are focused on critical programs that get upstream  
5 and prevent harmful behaviors from entering our formations.

6 Our civilian workforce is a readiness multiplier across  
7 the total Army, and our investments in their capabilities  
8 are crucial for meeting the needs of the Army of the future.

9 All of these efforts contribute to Army readiness and  
10 are vital for retaining our soldiers, civilians, and their  
11 families.

12 For Army families, we program \$1.6 billion across  
13 fiscal years 2024 to 2028 to improve the Army family housing  
14 inventory. For our unaccompanied soldiers, we invested over  
15 \$2.1 billion annually in the construction, sustainment,  
16 restoration, and modernization of barracks across fiscal  
17 years 2025 through 2029.

18 With congressional support, we will keep the Army on a  
19 sustainable strategic path as we transform for the future.  
20 We will deliver ready combat formations with advanced  
21 capabilities to defend our nation and its interests. We  
22 understand the critical importance of preserving the all-  
23 volunteer force. We will continue investments in the  
24 quality of life for our soldiers, our civilians, and their  
25 families. We will maintain and build upon cohesive teams

1 and foster climates of trust, grounded in our shared Army  
2 values.

3 Chair Warren, Ranking Member Scott, members of this  
4 committee, I thank you for your generous and unwavering  
5 support for our talented soldiers, civilians, and their  
6 families. I look forward to your questions. Thank you.

7 [The prepared statement of General Stitt follows:]

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1           Senator Warren: Thank you, Lieutenant General Stitt.  
2 Appreciate it.

3           Now we are ready. Vice Admiral Cheeseman.

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1 STATEMENT OF VICE ADMIRAL RICHARD J. CHEESEMAN, JR.,  
2 USN, DEPUTY CHIEF OF NAVAL OPERATIONS FOR PERSONNEL,  
3 MANPOWER, AND TRAINING, N1, UNITED STATES NAVY

4 Admiral Cheeseman: Chair Warren, Ranking Member Scott,  
5 and distinguished subcommittee members, thank you for the  
6 opportunity to appear before you today. I am honored to be  
7 here to serve and represent the sailors of our United States  
8 Navy, a high-quality, motivated workforce comprised of the  
9 best America has to offer.

10 The Navy's budget request for fiscal year 2025 funds  
11 holistic effort to support our warfighters and the  
12 foundation that supports them. It prioritizes our people  
13 with increases in military pay and basic allowance and  
14 additional funds for recruiting and retention bonuses. The  
15 budget also prioritizes several quality-of-life and service  
16 initiatives, including tools and education for our  
17 leadership specifically to address mental health, suicide,  
18 and other harmful behaviors that build upon quality-of-  
19 service investments from the fiscal year 2024 appropriation.

20 And while I am grateful for your continued support of  
21 our sailors and their families, I must stress that our Navy  
22 remains most lethal and effective when we are able to  
23 execute under a full year budget.

24 We remain in a very challenging recruiting environment.  
25 Our current projected miss is 6,200 against an increased

1 mission of 40,600 sailors, which is significantly better  
2 than what we anticipated at the beginning of the fiscal  
3 year, and I remain optimistic that investments in marketing  
4 and data analytics will show additional progress. As we  
5 position ourselves for success in the coming year, I look  
6 forward to sharing our continued performance improvement and  
7 to discussing these details today.

8         With recruiting challenges there is a need for greater  
9 retention. I appreciate your steadfast support in funding  
10 sailors' special incentive pays and bonuses, which are vital  
11 to targeting complex skill sets. These monetary incentives,  
12 coupled with several other initiatives, have helped us  
13 maintain our historically healthy high retention levels.

14         Last month, we rolled out Culture of Excellence 2.0,  
15 which focuses on building great people, great leaders, and  
16 great teams, and prepares our warfighters to dominate in  
17 combat, innovate and solve hard problems, and prevent  
18 harmful behaviors. It simplifies, streamlines, and aligns  
19 several programs and concepts into an actionable approach to  
20 building great culture while providing tools for commanders  
21 to better understand and act on the needs of their people.

22         Our women and men of the United States Navy -- active,  
23 reserve, and civilian -- along with their families, give our  
24 Navy the decisive edge. We must build strong warfighting  
25 teams, recruit and retain talented people from all across

1 America, and provide them world-class training and  
2 education, and then ensure they are prepared for when their  
3 Navy story ends, whether it be a single enlistment or a full  
4 career.

5 You and every American can be proud of your sailors and  
6 their families. I appreciate your continued support, and I  
7 look forward to your questions.

8 [The prepared statement of Admiral Cheeseman follows:]

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1           Senator Warren: Thank you, Vice Admiral. Lieutenant  
2 General Glynn.

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1           STATEMENT OF LIEUTENANT GENERAL JAMES F. GLYNN, USMC,  
2 DEPUTY COMMANDANT FOR MANPOWER AND RESERVE AFFAIRS, UNITED  
3 STATES MARINE CORPS

4           General Glynn: Chair Warren, Ranking Member Scott, and  
5 distinguished members of the subcommittee, it is my  
6 privilege to appear before you today, along with Sergeant  
7 Major Reiff, sitting behind me, to provide an overview of  
8 our Marine Corps personnel.

9           Your Marine Corps and your Marines remain strong.  
10 Despite headwinds, we met the recruiting and the retention  
11 missions in the last year, and we expect to do so again this  
12 year. We have done so while maintaining top quality,  
13 something on which we will never compromise. The high  
14 caliber of Marines directly contributes to the warfighting  
15 capability and readiness of your United States Marine Corps.

16           Despite our success, recruiting still presents  
17 challenges, including a shrinking pool of eligible youth,  
18 who are increasingly unfamiliar with the value of military  
19 service. To counter these trends we are modernizing how we  
20 recruit and working to increase access to schools, and we  
21 ask for your continued support of these efforts. Together  
22 we can and must ensure the health of the all-volunteer  
23 force.

24           I am pleased to report that we also continue to retain  
25 Marines at a historic pace, both in number and in quality.

1 It reinforces that once one becomes a Marine, they desire to  
2 remain a Marine. The desire for continued service speaks to  
3 our ethos -- being part of a team, accomplishing the  
4 mission, taking care of one another, and serving something  
5 bigger than yourself. It also shows to us that Marines  
6 believe in their leaders and the processes that assign,  
7 promote, and award in a fair and transparent manner.

8 Our talent management efforts remain foundational to  
9 the force design that you have heard much about and the  
10 future success of our Corps. Our overarching goal remains  
11 to increase Marine Corps warfighting capability and sustain  
12 our lethality, as well as maintaining our responsibility to  
13 be the nation's premier expeditionary force-in-readiness.  
14 In fact, to that end, more than 30,000 Marines are forward  
15 deployed or forward stationed, prepared to respond right  
16 now.

17 Warfighting readiness is built on trust, including  
18 trust in Marine Corps support to its families. Family  
19 readiness is quite simply readiness, whether it is a  
20 childcare issue, health care, housing -- these things matter  
21 to Marines, they matter to our families. Consequently, they  
22 matter to me.

23 We continue to work hard to prevent destructive  
24 behaviors and increase resilience. In the past few months  
25 we have emphasized Marine Corps total fitness as our

1 innovative, holistic, and integrated strategy that is being  
2 implemented right now. It strives to enhance Marine  
3 resilience and readiness across all domains, with specific  
4 emphasis on mental, spiritual, social, and physical. I look  
5 forward to our dialogue on these topics so we can continue  
6 to provide Marines with the highest quality of life.

7 It is my honor to represent your Marine Corps today,  
8 and I look forward to your questions.

9 [The prepared statement of General Glynn follows:]

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1           Senator Warren: Thank you, Lieutenant General Glynn.

2 I appreciate those comments. Lieutenant General Miller.

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1           STATEMENT OF LIEUTENANT GENERAL CAROLINE M. MILLER,  
2           USAF, DEPUTY CHIEF OF STAFF FOR MANPOWER, PERSONNEL, AND  
3           SERVICES, A1, UNITED STATES AIR FORCE

4           General Miller: Yes, Chair Warren, Ranking Member  
5           Scott, and distinguished members of the subcommittee. I am  
6           honored to have the opportunity to appear before you with my  
7           fellow service personnel colleagues.

8           The Department of the Air Force is committed to  
9           ensuring we are postured to deter, and if necessary, prevail  
10          in an era of great power competition against two  
11          sophisticated peer competitors, the People's Republic of  
12          China and Russia. To maintain our competitive advantage it  
13          is imperative we continue to grow and sustain the force we  
14          need today and in the future. We are dedicated to  
15          developing airmen with specialized skills for strategic  
16          solutions and creating alternative career paths focused on  
17          technical expertise, to include reestablishing warrant  
18          officers and develop specialized technical tracks.

19          We have established human capital management guiding  
20          principles for our civilian workforce to focus on our  
21          priorities in talent acquisitions and foster agility and  
22          innovation. These efforts enable our forces to better adapt  
23          to an evolving and uncertain future.

24          To assist in identifying and retaining our talented  
25          performers, we continue to transform our legacy human

1 resource information technology systems. For the first time  
2 in department history, we administered the Weighted Airman  
3 Promotion System electronically in February, and  
4 successfully implemented a complete overhaul of our officer  
5 and enlisted performance evaluation systems to ensure we  
6 capture performance characteristics critically important to  
7 define, develop, and incentivize our airmen.

8 We continue to focus on retaining our rated force and  
9 have two active duty aviation bonus programs implemented in  
10 fiscal year 2023, the Expedited Aviator Retention Incentive  
11 and the Demonstration Bonus, the Demo. Although implemented  
12 late in the year, both programs proved to be highly  
13 effective, retaining an additional 380 pilots compared to  
14 the previous years.

15 While those numbers are encouraging, the Air Force has  
16 experienced a slight decrease in retention rate, which we  
17 are countering with increasing recruiting effort and  
18 quality-of-life initiatives. The regular Air Force remains  
19 on track to meet our fiscal year 2024 recruiting goal of  
20 27.2 thousand personnel, but we will be short slightly of  
21 our end strength.

22 Our force management programs have increased our  
23 recruiting pool and positively impacted our overall  
24 recruiting numbers. Our commitment to quality-of-life  
25 initiatives for military members, their spouses, and

1 families remains strong. Available, affordable, and quality  
2 childcare remains a critical readiness factor, as does  
3 spouse employment. I am looking forward to sharing our many  
4 successes in these and other quality-of-life efforts with  
5 you today.

6 We have also focused significant efforts to build  
7 resilience within the force. Across the department, we  
8 initiated the Wingman Guardian Connect Instruction Program,  
9 targeting first-term enlisted airmen and guardians. The  
10 initial pilot showed a significant increase in social  
11 connections, a decrease in causes of depression and suicide  
12 risks.

13 As the Department of the Air Force looks to the future  
14 to maintain our competitive advantage and reoptimize for the  
15 great power competition, we remain committed to recruit,  
16 retain, and develop our most critical weapons system, our  
17 airmen. I am excited to share our successes with you today,  
18 and look forward to your questions.

19 [The prepared statement of General Miller follows:]  
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1           Senator Warren: Thank you, Lieutenant General Miller.

2 Ms. Kelley.

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1           STATEMENT OF KATHARINE KELLEY, DEPUTY CHIEF OF SPACE  
2 OPERATIONS FOR HUMAN CAPITAL, UNITED STATES SPACE FORCE

3           Ms. Kelley: Chair Warren, Ranking Member Scott, and  
4 distinguished members of this subcommittee, thank you for  
5 the opportunity to appear before you today representing the  
6 over 14,000 uniformed and civilian Guardians of your Space  
7 Force.

8           Our military and our nation's modern way of life  
9 depends on your Space Force successfully securing our  
10 nation's interest in, from, and to space. And while  
11 advanced technology is a vital component of our  
12 capabilities, our Guardians are the foundation of our  
13 ability to maintain freedom of action in space.

14           Building and maintaining this force starts with winning  
15 the fight for talent. In an era where opportunities to work  
16 in the growing space economy are expanding at an  
17 unprecedented pace, the Space Force must be seen as an  
18 employer of choice, and we continue to focus on that.

19           To continue attracting the talent we need we must offer  
20 a robust and competitive compensation package, compelling  
21 and rewarding career opportunities that speak to today's  
22 youth and strong support for spouses and their families.  
23 The Space Force recognizes that quality-of-life issues like  
24 pay and compensation, spouse employment, and available  
25 childcare are significant factors in the family decision to

1 enter and continue in a military service and a military way  
2 of life. We are focused on initiatives to ensure all  
3 Guardians are appropriately compensated for their service  
4 and are prioritizing childcare and spouse employment in our  
5 efforts to sustain quality of life for all.

6 Ultimately, we must implement strong branding and  
7 talent acquisition efforts to ensure our target recruitment  
8 populations understand the value proposition as our nation's  
9 newest military service.

10 Our work does not stop with attracting talent. We must  
11 continue to focus on keeping the highly trained and  
12 experienced Guardians we have invested in. Thanks to your  
13 strong partnership we continue to make progress serving as a  
14 pathfinder in modernizing the department's approach to  
15 talent management, starting with enhanced space-focused  
16 education. We have established a refreshed Officer Training  
17 Course, which will expose new officers to the full spectrum  
18 of mission sets before they arrive at their first duty  
19 station. We have also partnered with some of our nation's  
20 top universities to provide new models of intermediate and  
21 advanced professional military education. This is for both  
22 uniformed and civilian Guardians.

23 We are revamping our performance assessment and  
24 leadership selection processes, drawing on best practices  
25 from inside and outside the department, to build high-

1 performing teams and strong leaders. But perhaps most  
2 importantly, with the tremendous support of this  
3 subcommittee, we are working to build a first-of-its-kind,  
4 flexible military service model as envisioned in the  
5 recently passed Space Force Personnel Management Act.

6 We are doing these things, and much more, not just to  
7 take care of Guardians and their families, because it is the  
8 right thing to do it and it certainly is, but because taking  
9 care of Guardians is what is required to win.

10 Warfighting success in space starts not with the  
11 technology on orbit but with the people who develop the  
12 technology, who launch it, operate it, and exploit it in  
13 defense of our nation. Your support enables our Guardians  
14 to stand ready to face any challenge in the space domain.

15 Thank you for the privilege of representing them today,  
16 and I look forward to your questions.

17 [The prepared statement of Ms. Kelley follows:]

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1 Senator Warren: Thank you, Ms. Kelley.

2 Senator King.

3 Senator King: Thank you, Madam Chair. I appreciate  
4 it. If any of you have a really good software scheduling  
5 package let us know. I am scheduled in four subcommittee  
6 meetings right now, and in fact in 10 minutes, when I have  
7 to chair. So I apologize for not being able to stay with  
8 you because what you are doing is incredibly important.

9 Here is an issue that I am really focused on that I  
10 hope you will think about and take back, and that is the  
11 transition between active duty and veteran status. I talk  
12 to veterans all the time in Maine, talk to active duty  
13 members. Everybody identifies this as a problem. The most  
14 dangerous moment for veterans -- and we are all concerned  
15 about veteran suicide -- is in the transition, is in the 2  
16 or 3 years during the period that that takes place.

17 So part of it is renewed emphasis within the officer  
18 corps on the TAP program, the Transition Assistance Program,  
19 and I am afraid sometimes it is an afterthought. The rule  
20 is it is supposed to be done a year before the military  
21 member leaves, and the statistics are pretty dire. I cannot  
22 remember, but it is like 20 percent actually meet that  
23 deadline.

24 But here is a specific question, and I am going to  
25 pursue this with Mr. Vazirani. On the form -- well, let me

1 back up. One of the ways to make that transition better is  
2 to supply the outgoing military personnel's contact  
3 information to the State Veterans Affairs Office where they  
4 are going, so they can be met at the airport, so they can be  
5 put in connection with all the benefits that are available  
6 to them, so they can meet somebody. Ideally, in my case, in  
7 my suggestion, to have a buddy who will meet them and help  
8 guide them through the maze of programs and benefit that are  
9 available to them.

10 The problem is under the law the Defense Department  
11 cannot forward the contact information to the State Veterans  
12 Office without the servicemember checking a box that says  
13 yes, go and do so. And the problem is only 18 percent check  
14 that box. And my belief is that they do not really realize  
15 what the implications are.

16 So we have tried to get the Defense Department to  
17 change it to an opt-in rather than an opt-in. They tell us  
18 they cannot do that, under the law. We are talking about an  
19 amendment in the Defense Bill to make it an opt-out instead  
20 of an opt-in.

21 But here is one thing I hope you will discuss, and that  
22 is I want to know what the question is next to the box.  
23 Does it say, "Shall we submit your personal information to  
24 the State Veterans Office?" That is sort of scary. Or  
25 maybe it ought to say, "Shall we submit your contact

1 information so that the State Veterans Office where you are  
2 bound can assist you in accessing all the benefits that you  
3 have obtained?" Do you see what I mean? How the question  
4 is asked is important.

5 So I am trying to determine exactly what it says on  
6 that form. So I would really appreciate it if you all would  
7 give some thought to this, A, to beefing up the TAP program,  
8 and, B, to think about how to change the form in such a way  
9 that it still comports with the law but allows the military  
10 personnel to have a better sense that there is nothing back-  
11 handed about this. This is for their benefit.

12 So I hope you will all take some cognizance of this.  
13 Admiral, you were nodding. I take it you think that this is  
14 important, as well.

15 Admiral Cheeseman: Sir, it sounds like a very good  
16 idea and I am very willing to work with Secretary Vazirani  
17 and others to enable your vision, sir.

18 Senator King: Thank you. I am going to pursue this  
19 with the Secretary, and I will also be pursuing it with the  
20 committee as we take up the Defense Bill this year.

21 Thank you very much, Madam Chair. And I apologize for  
22 my absence, but the other hearing will not even happen  
23 unless I get there.

24 Senator Warren: Thank you, Senator King, and I  
25 appreciate you being here, and good luck on making it to

1 your other meeting.

2 Senator Scott.

3 Senator Scott: So let me completely agree with Senator  
4 King. This does not make any sense. We had the same issue  
5 when I was governor, and I think we have about 1.5 million  
6 veterans, and they just would not give us any information.  
7 We had a whole veterans group that are trying to do  
8 everything they can to provide.

9 Senator King: [Inaudible.]

10 Senator Scott: Absolutely. I agree with what you are  
11 talking about.

12 Okay. So all of you guys are working on recruitment,  
13 so thank you for what you are doing. What if you each had  
14 \$4 billion? By the way, General Stitt, congratulations on  
15 your service. Thank you for all of it. I hope you enjoy  
16 your retirement, and I hope you move to Florida, like  
17 everybody else does. It is cold in Massachusetts, just so  
18 you know, just in case you are thinking about it.

19 If each of you had \$4 billion to improve recruitment,  
20 how would you spend it? Would you spend on wages? How  
21 would you do it? General Stitt, do you want to start?

22 General Stitt: Senator Scott, it is a rare question  
23 that we are often proffered \$4 billion, so thank you for  
24 setting the conditions with \$4 billion. Looking at  
25 recruiting, how do we look at marketing, and the success

1 that we are seeing with the Be All You Can Be campaign, the  
2 recent advertisements that we saw during the men's and  
3 women's Final Four with the addition of the Coach Krzyzewski  
4 ad as a small reflection of what we are seeing for continued  
5 research, that brought us to the unveiling of the Be All You  
6 Can Be campaign, the data that we are collecting from it,  
7 and the further refinement.

8 Certainly investing across the totality of human  
9 capital and understanding that it is an individual that  
10 provides the United States Army their competitive advantage,  
11 be that a soldier or a civilian. So working with our  
12 counterparts in DoD, assessing the totality of compensation  
13 with the Quadrennial Review of Military Compensation, and  
14 looking at that and providing our input I think provides us  
15 another means, potentially, to examine where we could put  
16 resources coming forward.

17 Senator Scott: Admiral, Go Navy.

18 Admiral Cheeseman: Senator, Go Navy, and thank you for  
19 the time in your office last week. I enjoyed our  
20 conversation.

21 Sir, any last dollar that the United States Navy could  
22 get in this area would go towards marketing and advertising  
23 and other activities that would increase the propensity to  
24 serve in the United States Navy and in the military  
25 services. We know through our data analytic efforts that

1 every 1 percent increase in propensity equals about 1,400  
2 additional contracts, and in previous years when propensity  
3 was around 14 percent, we generally had no issues making our  
4 recruiting goals.

5 Propensity right now is about 9 percent, but that is  
6 not enabled by influencer that could help those young folks,  
7 those young future sailors, join the Navy. I get plenty of  
8 young sailors in the target demographic between 18 and 24,  
9 filling out forms, showing initial interest. It is whether  
10 their interest wanes once they leave the initial contact  
11 with their recruiter or whether it is enabled by a mentor  
12 that understands what military service is all about.

13 So my answer, in short, is anything that would increase  
14 propensity in this country, and not necessarily with the 18-  
15 to 24-year-olds but among the influencers, you know,  
16 coaches, guidance counselors, student administrators,  
17 clergy. Somebody that could offer a conversation about what  
18 the military has to offer, that is what I would do with that  
19 money, sir. Thank you for your time.

20 Senator Scott: General Glynn?

21 General Glynn: Senator, thank you, and anticipating  
22 that my colleagues would go right after the recruiting thing  
23 I tried to shape it. First and foremost, any investment in  
24 young folks and their influencers is valuable, regardless of  
25 if it is \$1 or \$4 billion, any investment. Because in my

1 opening comments I suggested that we increasingly find  
2 -- and you and I discussed previously, that young folks are  
3 not even aware of the opportunities so they are not even  
4 being considered as often as they might have been in the  
5 past. That is number one.

6 But I would not put all my money there. I would put a  
7 good chunk of it -- and I might be biased by our Executive  
8 Safety Council that we held last night -- I would put a lot  
9 of it into our training and simulation, because that can be  
10 an attraction to young folks. The folks that are going to  
11 leave the service after one stint in uniform can go out and  
12 tell folks about the high quality and the investment that  
13 they made in their life and their livelihood going forward.  
14 So I think I would put a significant amount into training  
15 and simulation.

16 And lastly, to your earlier panel, we cannot invest  
17 enough in the quality of life that is an expectation, not  
18 just for our servicemembers but for our families. We hear  
19 about it all the time. It is the tipping point in their  
20 decision to stay or go, a perception that things might be  
21 better, different somewhere else than in the military.  
22 Oftentimes we know it is not. And I think earlier you  
23 rightfully focused on an area where I would invest in  
24 military health care. It is an expectation of our families,  
25 and we hear about it.

1           General Miller: Yes, Senator. Thank you for the  
2 question. I mean, we have all been thinking about it a lot  
3 over the last several years. But if there were \$4 billion,  
4 I mean, similar to my colleagues here, well, there are two  
5 things I think that I would do. I would bring individuals  
6 to the installations, from all over the country, you know,  
7 however we are going to do that. Charter aircrafts. Get  
8 them onto the installation, show them what we can do. A lot  
9 of the discussion is the fact that they are not exposed  
10 because there are decreasing military veterans in our  
11 country. But when you actually bring them -- and you need  
12 to bring them younger, and bring them in and say any job  
13 that you want, or anything that you are passionate about, we  
14 have it in the military.

15           But I would bring them to the installations. We have  
16 to break down the barriers. Once we had 9/11 it was very  
17 difficult to get on and off the installations, so even if  
18 you in the neighborhood you have to bring them on there. So  
19 I would do that across the country.

20           The second thing I would do would be, well, there are  
21 two things. The infrastructure, absolutely we have got to  
22 invest in, I mean, because they come and you have got  
23 hangars falling down. And so we have taken risk over the  
24 multiple years on infrastructure so we can go after the  
25 shiny platforms. But we have to demonstrate that we do care



1 for the families -- dorms, housing, childcare facilities.

2 And then finally, the medical system just has to be  
3 addressed. The medical system is a barrier to service  
4 because people hear about it. And I know that MHS GENESIS,  
5 we are working through that, the DHA. However, there are  
6 still multiple stories of families not able to get access to  
7 care. So we have got to increase our ability to provide  
8 access to care for military members, spouses, children.

9 And then, you know, CONUS is not as bad, but overseas,  
10 there are some countries that military families cannot get  
11 access to care.

12 Senator Scott: Thank you.

13 Ms. Kelley: Senator, thank you for the question. I  
14 certainly agree with all of the comments my colleagues have  
15 made. I would offer a couple of thoughts from the Space  
16 Force perspective, which is a little bit unique, by some  
17 benchmarks.

18 First, the Space Force absolutely is very excited that  
19 we are making our recruiting numbers, but they are really  
20 small numbers. What we know, though, is we definitely have  
21 a brand awareness issue, and the National Call to Service  
22 campaign that was discussed a little bit on Panel 1 and kind  
23 of discussed here today is really important to the Space  
24 Force, as well.

25 We think that the data that we have received thus far,

1 year over year, really bears out the fact that the American  
2 people really do not know about the Space Force writ large,  
3 and even if they do they might not understand what we do.  
4 So my first emphasis would be on making sure that the value  
5 proposition of the service is known to the potential group  
6 of young people who may join.

7 The second thing I would offer is that we really do  
8 have a unique opportunity with the Personnel Management Act  
9 to really recharacterize how people can serve inside of the  
10 Space Force in full- and part-time work roles, and allow for  
11 them to take advantage of things like academic time or  
12 working in a private company, without sacrificing the  
13 administrative barriers going between on active duty or into  
14 the Reserves or into the Guard. So there is something to be  
15 said there about reducing that barrier structure, which  
16 then, I believe, has the likelihood of allowing people to  
17 want to remain with the military instead of being forced to  
18 make a choice to leave.

19 And the last point I would make on this is the quality  
20 of life and the care for families, to not make that a choice  
21 against remaining with the military service has got to be an  
22 emphasis. And I know it is for all of us that are here  
23 today, at this panel.

24 Senator Scott: Thanks. Thanks, Chair.

25 Senator Warren: Thank you. Thank you, Senator Scott.

1           So recruitment, we hear a lot about that. I want to  
2 focus in again on an issue we have talked about that is the  
3 retention issue.

4           Two-thirds of active duty military families have  
5 children living at home -- two-thirds. The number one issue  
6 for many, many parents is, "Where will my children be? Who  
7 is taking care of them when I have to be at work?" Now,  
8 this is why the Department of Defense runs the largest  
9 employer-sponsored childcare program in the entire United  
10 States. Our childcare is affordable, it is high quality, so  
11 that our servicemembers can show up to work, protect our  
12 country, and know that their children are safe and well  
13 cared for.

14           Here is the good news. The DoD program is known for  
15 being one of the best childcare programs in the country.  
16 But here is the bad news. DoD cannot find enough workers.  
17 There were 12,000 children on DoD's waitlists as of last  
18 year, waiting for childcare. Think about what that means.  
19 That is more than 12,000 parents struggling to find out how  
20 to meet their military obligations when they have small  
21 children at home that need care.

22           So today we have the deputy chiefs, and I just want to  
23 get this on the record. And I will start with you,  
24 Lieutenant General Miller.

25           Is childcare critical to the Air Force's readiness and

1 retention, and therefore to national security? Or let me  
2 ask it another way. How important is childcare to being  
3 able to retain the military that you have invested in? You  
4 have paid for their training. These are the people who not  
5 only can do the job, the people who are doing the job. How  
6 much do you need childcare?

7 General Miller: Oh, it is absolutely critical to  
8 readiness. The first thing you do when you get a PCS  
9 assignment is you look at, if you have children, where are  
10 my children going to go? What is the access to the  
11 childcare? You know, what is available to me? How do I get  
12 on the list as soon as possible? So it is absolutely, it is  
13 a mission ready -- I mean, it is mission readiness.

14 Senator Warren: Mission readiness. Lieutenant General  
15 Glynn?

16 General Glynn: Yeah, I would, I would echo Lieutenant  
17 General Miller's comment. It continues to be a  
18 consideration for every family. And what families seek, we  
19 hear over and over again, is predictability. And so can I  
20 predictably, in this instance, predictably, take care of my  
21 children? Do I know what school system? Are there after-  
22 school activities available? And all the things related to.  
23 Yes, Senator, it is very important.

24 Senator Warren: Okay. "Can I count on this," really  
25 important. Vice Admiral Cheeseman?

1           Admiral Cheeseman:  Senator, same answer for the Navy.  
2  It is absolutely mission critical to be able to take care of  
3  our sailors' children.  And we are making every effort we  
4  can to increase capacity, all those childhood development  
5  centers that you are talking about.

6           Senator Warren:  And Lieutenant General Stitt?

7           General Stitt:  Senator Warren, critical to the overall  
8  quality of life and therefore critical to the care of our  
9  soldiers and families.  We want to make sure that when the  
10 soldier comes in to work they are focused on the mission,  
11 and that they know that their child is cared for  
12 appropriately.

13          Senator Warren:  And Ms. Kelley?

14          Ms. Kelley:  Senator Warren, it is absolutely crucial  
15 in the Space Force, because of the uniqueness of some of the  
16 mission sets that we do and some of that focus around-the-  
17 clock type of scenario.

18          Senator Warren:  You know, that is the thing about it,  
19 too.  It is the kind of work you do.

20          I do not know how to keep underscoring this.  Twelve  
21 thousand children are on your waitlists right now, and I  
22 have to assume the demand would be even greater, except  
23 there are some people who just give up and do not even put a  
24 child on the waitlist.  They just say "the list already is  
25 too hard."

1           And here is the problem. Since the start of the  
2 pandemic, recruiting and retention of DoD childcare workers  
3 has been a challenge. The shortages and the waitlist for  
4 military families are not getting better. You all are  
5 talking about your recruiting is getting better across the  
6 services. It is not getting better for your childcare  
7 workers.

8           In March, DoD reported it was still short 3,900  
9 caregivers needed to match our existing childcare needs. In  
10 other words, the DoD centers are there. This is the part  
11 that is really shocking. We have got the physical  
12 facilities for it, but the staffing shortages right now are  
13 so bad that centers are accepting 30 percent fewer children  
14 than they could if they had full staffing.

15           And I know there are a lot of ideas about how to  
16 improve childcare access for military families, but clearly  
17 staffing up has to be the number one focus. Hiring more  
18 people would let us increase the overall capacity, literally  
19 by tens of thousands of children, if we just hire up to all  
20 of the spots we have got.

21           So there is good news again, and that is this year's  
22 DoD's budget request includes funding for proposals from a  
23 special task force to address the childcare staffing  
24 shortage. Number one on the list is reworking the pay scale  
25 for childcare workers. We will be doing this for the first

1 time in 30 years. We need to give these caregivers the  
2 critical pay raises that they need.

3 DoD has asked for \$33.5 million to invest in childcare  
4 for military families. I would just like anybody who wants  
5 to, to make the case to get it on the record, why DoD should  
6 get its full \$33.5 million from this Senate, and we will  
7 fight for it over in the House, so that, at a minimum, we  
8 can start to staff up the facilities that we have got.

9 Anyone want to swing at that ball?

10 General Miller: Senator, I will take that. We have  
11 got to get the additional funding to do this. Right now we  
12 have, in the Air Force we have initiated many things to  
13 increase that, and we have seen an increase, but we are  
14 still sitting at about 80 percent childcare providers. So  
15 we have a 20 percent deficit. And so anything we can do. I  
16 will tell you that we are also looking at modifying the PDs  
17 of the childcare, so it was more of an educational type  
18 thing, so we can pay them more.

19 But absolutely, we need that because it is a readiness  
20 issue, and right now we are facing peer competitors that we  
21 have not seen since probably World War II, and Russia, you  
22 know, during the Cold War, so it is critical now.

23 Senator Warren: Good. Anybody have anything they want  
24 to add on this?

25 General Stitt: I look forward to working with the

1 committee and the Department of Defense on a way forward.  
2 We need to find the right people and compensate them  
3 appropriately.

4 Senator Warren: Thank you, Lieutenant General Stitt.

5 General Glynn: Senator?

6 Senator Warren: Lieutenant General Glynn?

7 General Glynn: Yeah, just, one, I think, one positive  
8 note in all of what you just said, and then reinforcing it  
9 is, thanks to the support we have gotten in the past -- the  
10 fee assistance program, right? -- it gives me much more  
11 comfort about where and what our children are up to, because  
12 we do not have a waiting list for fee assistance. The  
13 assistance is being fully utilized and maximized.

14 And so what it does speak to is what, I believe, you  
15 said earlier, which is the quality of the care and the  
16 confidence that families have in the on-installation  
17 childcare. So we have folks waiting for their opportunity  
18 to come out of, you know, something, not on an installation,  
19 onto it. And I am optimistic, and we appreciate the  
20 continued support there.

21 But, you know, to your point, you know, the funding of  
22 it, there are many quality-of-life discussions and issues  
23 that many of them came up in Panel 1. We collectively talk  
24 about this all the time. There are not too many we would  
25 argue against. But we have to have the top-line funding to



1 afford them. There are things in what you are suggesting  
2 here that we would all do right now.

3 We have different levels of assistance for folks, for  
4 their first child that enrolls between 50 and 100 percent.  
5 Talking between us, we would all have 100 percent if we  
6 could all afford 100 percent. And so we have to have the top  
7 line to afford these programs.

8 Senator Warren: And our job is to make sure you can  
9 afford 100 percent.

10 Did you want to add something, Vice Admiral Cheeseman?

11 Admiral Cheeseman: Senator, yes, ma'am. I cannot not  
12 go on record after all my colleagues did.

13 Senator Warren: Absolutely.

14 Admiral Cheeseman: So I appreciate the time. So to  
15 your point about childcare, in the Navy, and I imagine it is  
16 in the rest of the services as well, there are CDCs within  
17 the budget to be built. A lot of emphasis has been put  
18 there, in the Navy, to give it the foundational support that  
19 our sailors need. Any assistance we could have from  
20 Congress to accelerate that or to help us with the hiring,  
21 the future hiring that we anticipate, will be greatly  
22 appreciated.

23 Senator Warren: Okay, I appreciate that. Miss Kelley,  
24 you do not want to be left behind here.

25 Ms. Kelley: Not at all. Certainly not on this topic,

1 ma'am. What I would add is also that there are other  
2 programs as well that we have to take advantage of that  
3 cover that round-the-clock care that we discussed --

4 Senator Warren: Yes.

5 Ms. Kelly: -- and also leveraging childcare in your  
6 home scenarios in the community partnerships that are so  
7 important. So clearly an additional top line to cover  
8 increased pay is crucial, as is taking advantage of some of  
9 the other options that are out there, because the situations  
10 are so unique for individual, at least in my case,  
11 Guardians, that we want to make sure that we have got  
12 multiple options to try to combat this issue.

13 Senator Warren: I am looking forward to the day when  
14 every single servicemember with a small child who is  
15 thinking about whether to sign up for another tour of duty  
16 is saying, "You know, if we don't though, we are going to  
17 lose this first-rate, top-notch, affordable, available child  
18 care. That is one more good reason to stay in the service."  
19 So that is the day we are looking forward to.

20 I want to thank you all. Do you have a closing  
21 statement, anything more you want to say?

22 I want to thank all of our witnesses for your testimony  
23 today. I also want to thank John Clark, Gary Leeling, Andy  
24 Scott, Noah Sisk, Katie Magnus, and Sean O'Keefe for their  
25 work in putting today's hearing together.

1           Our people are our greatest strength as a nation, and  
2 we need to do better for them. We have got a lot of people  
3 who are committed to doing well. We need to make sure you  
4 have got the resources to do even better. That is our job  
5 here.

6           I want to thank you all for being here. Senators have  
7 until Friday, May 9, to submit additional questions for the  
8 record.

9           With that, this hearing is adjourned.

10           [Whereupon, at 5:00 p.m., the subcommittee was  
11 adjourned.]

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