

RECORD VERSION

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Chairman Tillis, Ranking Member Gillibrand, distinguished members of this committee, we thank you for the opportunity to appear before you on behalf of the men and women of the United States Army.

The greatest strength of the United States Army is our people. Soldiers, Army Civilians, Families, and Soldiers for Life -- our Retirees and Veterans – are our greatest resource. We cannot fight and win our nation’s wars without a diverse group of talented, trained men and women of character. Readiness must be our number one priority. To sustain Army readiness, we must ensure that our people are ready, by focusing on first-class programs that provide continued care and resources for Soldiers and their Families.

The Army People Strategy

Army Senior Leaders signed the first ever *Army People Strategy* in October of 2019, paving the way for transformational change within every aspect of our people enterprise – Soldiers in the active and reserve components and Army Civilians. The *Army People Strategy* is foundational to all Army readiness, modernization, and reform efforts described in the 2018 *Army Strategy*. With the right people, in the right place, at the right time, our Army will successfully deploy, fight and win in multi-domain operations and excel in support of the Joint Force. Our people provide us with an enduring advantage to remain the world’s most ready, lethal and capable land combat force.

The *Army People Strategy* describes our shift from the traditional focus of simply distributing personnel to more deliberately developing, employing, retaining and managing the talents of our Soldiers and Civilians. With your help and using the authorities you provided in the National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA), we are building a 21st century talent management-based personnel system by creating the policies, programs and processes that recognize and capitalize on the unique knowledge, skills and behaviors of every member of the Army team, and then employs each member to achieve the maximum effect. This shift is transformational, increasing

our organizational agility, focusing on productivity, and resulting in increased readiness and lethality. It also integrates all people practices, generating a positive effect on organizational outcomes and leverages each individual's knowledge, skills, behaviors, and preferences.

The *Strategy* is transformational in that it describes our shift from simply distributing personnel to more deliberately managing the talents that our Soldiers and Civilians possess. The Army People Strategy is now driving Army resourcing decisions by creating policies, programs, and processes of how we acquire, develop, employ, and retain Army talent for our future budget cycles.

The *Army People Strategy* mission and vision are clear – *The Total Army will acquire, develop, employ, and retain the diversity of Soldier and Civilian talent needed to achieve Total Army readiness.* Our vision is to build cohesive teams for the Joint Force by maximizing the talents of our people - the Army's greatest strength and most important weapon system.

We will implement the *Army People Strategy* by executing tasks along four Lines of Effort -- Acquire, Develop, Employ and Retain Talent. These Lines of Effort are supported by four critical enablers -- a 21st century talent management system; meaningful Quality of Life programs; a proven Army Culture and appropriate resources/authorities. Through these actions, we will achieve our vision of cohesive teams that are ready, professional, diverse, and integrated.

We will pursue all four Lines of Effort simultaneously; however, our implementation priority and main effort through 2028 is Line of Effort 1, Acquire Talent. We have already implemented many activities that place an emphasis on modernizing our entire accessions enterprise -- marketing, recruiting and onboarding -- impacting the Army's officers and enlisted members in all three components.

The *Army People Strategy* lists six near-term priorities. Our Civilian and Military Implementation Plans, now being staffed, describe how we will accomplish these near-term priorities in a planned and coordinated approach.

1. The Army will reform Quality of Life programs for both Soldiers and Civilians based on the Army senior leaders' priorities: a) Housing and barracks, b) Healthcare, c) Childcare, d) Spouse Employment, and e) Permanent Change of Station Moves.

2. The Army Enterprise Marketing Office will transform all marketing communications, technologies and operations, ensuring we inform and inspire the diversity of military and civilian talent needed to remain the world's premier combat force.

3. The Army will reform accession activities based on an end-to-end evaluation of Total Army accession and retention programs. We will develop and implement programs, policies and systems to attract and align new Soldiers and Civilians with best-fit jobs across the Army, which will reduce attrition throughout the enterprise. Moreover, the Army will conduct Accessions Information Environment design, prototyping and phased releases, which will support the Army Accessions Enterprise in its mission of meeting and maintaining the Army's end-strength goals.

4. The Army will fully resource the Integrated Personnel and Pay System - Army (IPPS-A). IPPS-A is the Army's new web-based Human Resources system. It is the critical enabler for *The Army People Strategy* and the Army's transition to a Talent Management system. IPPS-A establishes a Human Resources data-rich environment and integrates personnel and pay functions for all 1.1 million Soldiers. Once fully deployed, IPPS-A will give Soldiers and their units unmatched and secure access to personnel data through a single, comprehensive Human Resources record. It will directly interface with the U.S.

Treasury for Soldier pay, a feature that will bring significant savings to the Army. As of this month, IPPS-A will be fielded to Army National Guard units in every U.S. State and Territory. To implement our Talent Alignment Process, the pending delivery of IPPS-A Release 4 will bring the marketplace to full operating capability. We will also prepare for Defense Civilian Human Resource Management System deployment in FY20, so as to leverage its data capabilities to improve Army Civilian talent alignment.

5. The Army will research, design, and pilot a suite of talent assessments for Soldiers and Civilians for future scaling.

6. For Army Civilians, the Army will develop and implement programs, policies, and systems that leverage new authorities to reduce hiring time and improve talent acquisition and talent management.

Acquiring Diverse Talent in a Competitive Environment

Today, we must inform and inspire public awareness of the wide array of opportunities the Army offers to attract the talent we require. We must direct our efforts to those places where such talent is most likely to reside and vividly describe the many rich opportunities of serving in the Army. We will inform rising generations at key points in their decision-making process so that they can consider Army career opportunities and be able to take advantage of them upon reaching an age at which they are eligible for service. The goal is for prospects to understand the Army better, perceive the intangible value of serving their country in the United States Army, and have the same effect on their influencers, prompting them to support prospects' consideration of the Army. We must make service in the U.S. Army a consideration of every American youth. We must articulate the opportunities and experiences in the Army today in a way that allows our Army to compete even in the best of nationwide economic trends.

Marketing remains a key tool to address these issues. The Army Enterprise Marketing Office and our advertising agency, DDB, have energized our activities with a

bold new campaign titled, "What's Your Warrior?" This campaign focuses on digital marketing social media versus traditional television ads. Initial indicators from the "What's Your Warrior" Campaign are showing positive key performance indicators, such as increased engagement on our GoArmy.com (<http://goarmy.com/>) website, where, year-over-year, we are generating more than 150% more leads. In addition, the Army eSports Team has opened doors to new markets by, coupling this team to new state-of-the-art gaming trailers we are exponentially increasing our ability to gather quality leads at large eGame venues. Another significant reform effort is the development of our principal IT accessions backbone, the Accessions Information Environment (AIE). AIE will dramatically affect the way we do business. It will free recruiters to interact with and contract future Soldiers anywhere there is cellular capability. It will also allow us to conduct marketing that is more precise and better determine our return on investment.

End Strength

The Army continues to focus on retention, recruiting and accessions in order to grow end strength according to plans and resources. We enlisted 68,185 recruits in the Active Component (AC), 39,063 recruits in the Army National Guard (ARNG), and 15,304 recruits in the Army Reserve (USAR) in FY19. The Army is currently on a path to achieve the FY20 recruiting missions in all three components while sustaining quality. The Army also improved entry screening in a number of areas, focusing on new methods of screening applicants with non-cognitive testing and through instituting a three-year study of new Soldier performance of a small group of applicants who exceed body fat standards, making clear its commitment to "Quality over Quantity." We will use the most effective mix of marketing, bonuses, and recruiter manning level to accomplish our accession mission. Continued Congressional funding in these areas will provide the Army the means to achieve the recruiting mission for all three Army components.

In addition to recruiting new Soldiers, the Army must continue to retain the most talented Soldiers and non-commissioned officers with the experience and skills necessary to meet current and future needs. The AC, USAR and ARNG each

achieved their FY19 retention missions. The AC has continued to exceed historical retention rates. In FY19, the AC, retained more than 82% of our eligible population. The historical average is ~81% of a specific year group. The highest retention rate on record is 90%, which was accomplished in FY18. Each component is set to accomplish their respective retention missions while maintaining quality standards in FY20. These retention achievements support meeting our NCO requirements in the near to mid-term. These achievements would not be possible without the funding support for incentives granted by Congress.

The Army saw an increase in officer retention in FY19, retaining 90.0% of the Army Competitive Category Captains and 94.6% of Majors compared to 89.0% and 94.4%, respectively, in FY18. Overall, the Army retained 91.9% of all officers in FY19. Since 2016, there has been nearly a 2% officer retention increase. Approximately 73% of officers are staying at least one year past their Active Duty Service Obligation. These statistics demonstrate that officers feel they are part of an organization worthy of their service and sacrifices.

Diversity

The FY20 NDAA directed the Secretary of Defense to “design and implement a five-year strategic plan for diversity and inclusion.” The Army is currently revising its Diversity Roadmap into a strategic plan, which satisfies NDAA requirements, is nested with the Army People Strategy and enables the Army to acquire and retain the diversity of talent required to fight and win the nation’s wars.

The Army continues to evolve efforts to align talent and promote diversity of race and gender in every Army officer branch. In FY20, the United States Military Academy (USMA) and U.S. Army Cadet Command (USACC/ROTC) commissioning outcomes of 65.8% white and 34.2% minority very closely reflect the U.S. population of 18-34 year olds with bachelor or higher degrees, at 65.1% white and 34.9% minority. Officer diversity in combat arms remains a focus across both USMA and ROTC programs from FY18 to FY20, with percentages of white cadets reducing from

71.9% to 69.6% and non-white cadets increasing from 28.1% to 30.4% across the past three years. Female representation in combat arms also increased in FY20, with 68 women scheduled to access into Infantry and Armor branches, 12 more than last year. In FY20 branching, women were considered for Infantry or Armor only if they volunteered and met talent requirements. In FY21, the Army will transition to gender neutral branching and use a talent-based branching approach at both USMA and USACC. The Army continues to integrate diverse attributes, experiences and backgrounds into our Officer Corps. Officer branching is nested with the Army People Strategy and is committed to selecting and retaining a cohort of officers to ensure the force of today and leaders of the future reflects the diversity and strength of our nation.

The Army strives to continuously improve efforts to select the right Soldier for the right job. Since January 2017, the U.S. Army Training and Doctrine Command has used the Occupational Physical Assessment Test (OPAT) to validate that recruits are ready to conduct rigorous initial entry training (IET). This physical screening tool is used for all Soldiers, regardless of gender. Achieving the requisite OPAT performance score ensures new Soldiers are capable of safely and effectively conducting high demand physical training associated with their assigned specialty. Longitudinal studies on OPAT are being conducted by various Army agencies to assess the OPAT's effect on on-time graduation and unprogrammed injury and attrition reduction. To date, OPAT performance has shown to be a good predictor of on-time graduation and attrition reduction across IET enterprise.

The Army maintains a standards-based approach to increase diversity and inclusion in all units. Any Soldier who meets the standards of a Military Occupational Specialty (MOS) is afforded the opportunity to serve in that MOS, regardless of gender. The number of women in the previously closed occupations of Infantry, Armor, and Field Artillery increases every year, and the Army is on track to have integrated units at every installation by the summer of 2020. To date, the Army has successfully accessed and transferred in more than 1,400 women into these

occupations. Women are assigned to units at Forts Hood, Bragg, Carson, Bliss, Campbell, Stewart, Drum, Riley, Polk, as well as in Germany and Italy. In 2020, assignments will expand to Hawaii and Alaska. Forty-two female Soldiers have graduated Ranger school; five women have been assigned to the Ranger Regiment; and three women have graduated the Special Forces Assessment & Selection Course and are enrolled in the Special Forces Qualification Courses.

Army Civilians

Army Civilians comprise approximately 23% of the Total Army People Enterprise. Army Civilians are an integral part of the Army team, committed to selfless service, enhancing readiness, in support of the protection and preservation of the nation. They play a critical role in enabling our Soldiers to deploy, fight, and win our nation's wars in which they also deploy in support of the Army's operational mission. Army Civilians are important in providing the Army with unmatched technical competence in many functional areas. They provide leadership, stability, and continuity across the Generating Force, allowing Soldiers to focus on warfighting. Our Civilian workforce is motivated, diverse, and highly skilled.

To achieve the Army's vision, the Army People Strategy with its nested Civilian Implementation plan will set the path for inspiring Army Civilian service, modernizing our approach to talent management and development, building readiness, and taking care of our people. Our commitment to executing this plan will enable us to attract and retain the best in defense of our Nation. We are concluding a number of trials and looking at modifying policies to improve Time to Hire. One initiative is aimed at increasing the use of Direct Hiring Authority and Expedited Hiring Authority. The Army Civilian Implementation Plan will establish direct efforts at recruiting and hiring our separating/transitioning Soldiers into the Civilian Corps.

The FY17 NDAA directed the Department of Defense (DoD) to consolidate all Service medical treatment facilities under the Defense Health Agency (DHA). Because of this action, more than 30,000 Civilians are being realigned under DHA. We are

committed to continued partnership across DoD to transfer management of military treatment facilities to DHA, while continuing to maintain an excellent standard of care.

To retain the best Army Civilian workforce possible, we have made improving the engagement of our Civilian workforce a priority. In 2019, the Army improved its ranking to seventh of 17 as Best Places to Work in the Federal Government and was best among all DoD agencies.

Building Resilience and Personnel Readiness

The Army has made significant strides this past year in strengthening resilience while combatting suicide, sexual violence, and alcohol and substance abuse. We recently renamed the SHARP, Ready & Resilient Directorate, the Army Resilience Directorate to better align with DoD's Force Resiliency Office and our sister Service's resilience directorates.

We have improved our SHARP Prevention Framework. We are focusing on the three domains of a prevention system -- Human Resources, Partnerships and Infrastructure -- and the actions necessary to address gaps in the Army's prevention system through capacity building. The Army SHARP Prevention Framework will guide our collective prevention efforts, optimize our prevention system and ensure we are properly nested with DOD's new Prevention Plan of Action (PPoA) (FY19-23) that was published in May 2019. The framework articulates the concepts of the PPoA within the context of Army doctrine and operational processes to ensure shared understanding and unified action from strategic to tactical levels. It provides codified, authoritative direction and guidance to the Total Army, enabling subordinate echelon planning and execution by leaders and SHARP professionals. Additionally, the framework informs and guides the development of improved prevention content within the education and training activities delivered by the Army SHARP Academy for all Army SHARP professionals, Army Leaders, Soldiers and Army Civilians.

In October 2019, we launched the Suicide Prevention/Resilience Strengthening pilot at Fort Bliss, Texas. The pilot is also being implemented at Fort Hood, Texas and Fort Campbell, Kentucky and at select National Guard and Reserve units. We are bringing to bear all of our new capabilities such as improved resilience training, the modified Global Assessment Tool, a revamped Behavioral Health Pulse survey to gauge concerns within units and a new Ready and Resilient Resource Guide.

Additionally, we developed and began fielding Increment 2 of the Commander's Risk Reduction Dashboard (CRRD2) this past August. CRRD2 expands leader visibility on everything from sexual assault/harassment incidents to substance abuse to suicide attempts. CRRD2 provides command teams with a much clearer picture of their Soldiers, enabling them to tailor prevention and intervention efforts more effectively to help their troops and to sustain unit readiness.

This past summer, the Army deployed 55 Master Resilience Trainers-Performance Experts (MRT-PEs) to Cadet Summer Training (CST) at Fort Knox, Kentucky. CST is the Army's largest cadet training exercise, where more than 8,000 ROTC cadets from across the country learn what it takes to become Army officers and future leaders of Soldiers. MRT-PEs worked with cadets at Advanced Camp, teaching them the mental skills that not only improve their performance in basic Soldiering tasks, but also enhance their leadership dexterity. By fostering a growth mindset, the MRT-PEs are equipping the cadets with the cognitive agility they can carry with them throughout their careers. We also deployed MRT-PEs to assist U.S. Army Alaska in training approximately 3,500 Soldiers on how to support teammates who may be struggling. The Army executed the month-long training at Fort Wainwright and Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson as part of a multipronged strategy to address underlying risk factors that may have contributed to an increase in deaths by suicide of Alaska-based Soldiers in 2018 and 2019.

The training focused on delivering *Engage* workshops twice-a-day. *Engage* sessions emphasize bystander intervention and prosocial behavior. The training is designed to teach people how to recognize behavioral deviations and the empathy and

skills required to take action. In addition to *Engage* training, the Army also trained Soldiers on the Soldier Leader Risk Reduction Tool, which aids leaders in identifying risk among their Soldiers and connecting them to relevant resources.

The Army tested a new junior leader training curriculum with pilots at Fort Bliss, Texas; Fort Hood, Texas; USAR units in Texas, Schofield Barracks, Hawaii; Fort Irwin, California and Fort Campbell, Kentucky. This training empowers first-line leaders with the tools to address and solve cultural problems in their squads, improve ethical decision-making and increase trust.

Finally, we are currently developing a Ready and Resilient Implementation Plan. Our Implementation Plan will guide our efforts to improve resilience, personal readiness, and unit cohesion.

The Army continues to make great strides in reducing the number of Non-Deployable Soldiers. Total Army Non-Deployable personnel were reduced by ~89K or 9% from June 2016 (high water mark) to December 2019 (~153K or 15% to ~64K or 6%). The current 6% Non-Deployable rate is a result of both aligning Army reporting with the DoD policy and command emphasis at all levels. We continue to increase readiness through a culture of deployability and fitness. Of the 64K non-deployable Soldiers in the Army as of December 2019, ~44K (or 69%) are non-deployable due to medical conditions. The most common non-deployable medical condition is a temporary medical profile (between 31 and 90 days) for a minor injury or illness (~21K or 34%), primarily for musculoskeletal injuries and behavioral health conditions. We are currently reviewing our medical readiness categories and classification of light duty personnel (temporary profiles) to determine how best to align them with Office of the Secretary of Defense guidance provided in the latest DoD instructions to more accurately depict a Soldier's deployability status at the operational, Service, and DoD levels.

The personnel readiness of Regular Army Brigade Combat Teams (BCTs) has more than doubled from June 2016 to December 2019 when 80% of AC BCTs achieved the highest state of personnel readiness. The continued increased of

personnel readiness is attributable to the collaborative efforts of Army Senior Leader emphasis and an engaged medical community.

The Army remains committed to efficiently evaluating our Nation's wounded, ill and injured Soldiers through the Integrated Disability Evaluation System (IDES). This collaborative DoD and Veterans Affairs (VA) program continues to provide a comprehensive medical evaluation for determining whether Soldiers are fit for continued military service. If found unfit, our priority is to deliver timely transition assistance and DoD and VA benefits upon separation. Improving trends in case processing times demonstrate the Army's resolve. Processing time (process referral to separation) continues to decrease from the 2018 average of 201 days to 193 days, as of December 2019. In accordance with the Secretary of Defense's IDES Directive dated September 19, 2019, we continue to strive towards achieving DoD's revised 180-day IDES timeliness goal by December 2020. As of February 2, 2020, the IDES non-deployable population remains steady at approximately 11,500 enrollments.

Managing the Talent of the Total Force

Talent Management provides our Army a competitive advantage in an era of accelerating technological change, generational shifts and global competitors who are rapidly closing the gap in economic and technological advancement. Our vision is to keep the Army at the forefront as the premier organization for human capital development and performance while delivering a diverse, professional force that dominates in land combat. We are creating a data-rich 21st century talent management system that enables decision-making using relevant information about individuals' unique skills, knowledge, behavior and preferences. The goal is to place the right person, in the right job, at the right time, over time. The Army is currently prototyping, piloting, or implementing talent management initiatives from Talent Based Branching (TBB) to Battalion Commander Assessment Program (BCAP), with the goal of implementing most of these initiatives by December 2020.

The FY19 NDAA provided the Army with key authorities we need to increase career flexibility for the officer corps. The Army now has the ability to promote officers based on merit, not just seniority which was the approved way of doing business for the last 40 years. During the first iteration of “Opt-In,” 18 of 24 officers meeting specific criteria in the Information Dominance category elected to participate in the FY20 LTC promotion board. During the same board, four officers applied, and two were approved, to “Opt-Out” of their primary zone consideration. Moreover, as of January, the Army has direct commissioned nine cyber officers. Three more await attendance at the Direct Commission Course.

The Army is creating an officer career assessment structure that begins with TBB. This initiative increased top quality talent matches between cadets and basic branches. Branches filled 66% of their allocations with "most preferred" cadets compared to 40% previously, and 88% of cadets received their top preference -- up from 77%. Officers are next assessed at the Captain's Career Course where, as of FY20, they are required to take the Graduate Record Exam and a battery of cognitive assessments. A series of cognitive and non-cognitive assessments are administered during Intermediate-Level Education to inform assignment and selection decisions. The culture of assessment continues with the BCAP. This five-day program assessed a participant's fitness, written and verbal communication, and cognitive and non-cognitive abilities. Exit interviews and surveys from participants, board members, and distinguished visitors indicate BCAP is better than the legacy system for selecting battalion commanders and other key Lieutenant Colonel positions. Seven hundred and fifty candidates participated in the first iteration of the BCAP in January and February 2020.

The data gleaned from the officer career assessment structure and the Army Talent Alignment Process (ATAP), a regulated marketplace for assignments, will inform better decisions. The first assignment cycle for the ATAP (OCT-NOV 2019) saw more than 14,000 eligible officers and units participate. Increased two-way participation

resulted in more than 55% of officers receiving their first-choice assignment and more than 80% of the officers receiving an assignment in their top 10% of preferences.

The Army is incorporating talent management into enlisted accessions through new programs, including the Assessment of Recruit Motivation and Strength Program (ARMS 2.0) and the Tailored Adaptive Personality Assessment System (TAPAS). Enlisted Manning Cycles are also now implementing talent management enhancements.

In support of Talent Management initiatives, the Army is building an enlisted marketplace as a temporary bridge to IPPS-A marketplace and talent management functionality. Active Component Soldiers will see all available requirements for which they are eligible, and will be able to preference them in an automated marketplace-type interface. The Army plans to roll out a marketplace pilot in June 2020 for Armor, Military Intelligence, and unit supply specialists, with Army-wide marketplace roll out projected for November 2020.

Enhancing Soldier and Family Quality of Life

The Army has established a Quality of Life Task Force to address some of the most pressing issues confronting Army Families today, including spouse employment, housing and child care. The task force is looking at specific actions which could help address spouse under/unemployment, including spouse preference for federal jobs and opportunities to engage with industry partners to leverage spouse employment opportunities. The task force is also looking at ways to educate spouses on employment resources and simplifying the application process for home-based businesses. Additionally, in accordance with the FY20 NDAA, the Army recently released a policy update to reimburse spouses up to \$1,000 for re-licensure/re-certification due to a permanent change of station.

The Army recognizes that access to affordable and reliable child care for our Military Families is an important quality of life and readiness issue. We are focusing first

on those installations with the longest wait lists for child care services and are requesting Congressional approval and funding for three Child Development Center (CDC) Military Construction projects (2 CDCs in Hawaii and one in Alaska) that will have 900 child care spaces. We have aggressively focused on building our Family Child Care (FCC) program through marketing and incentives. In January 2019, there were 130 FCC providers and today there are 215. This is not only good news for building child care capacity, but has also provided 85 military spouses with employment.

Army Review Boards Agency / Army Board for Correction of Military Records

The Army's recent backlog of 14,000 cases has been reduced to 3,200. The majority of the remaining cases are awaiting medical or behavioral health advisories prior to adjudication. This backlog grew primarily due to changes in legislation, which directed liberal consideration for Post-traumatic Stress Disorder, Traumatic Brain Injuries, Other Behavior Health Issues and Military Sexual Trauma, which resulted in an influx of cases submitted. To address the backlog, with Army leadership's assistance, Army Review Boards Agency (ARBA) was permitted to hire 40 temporary (term) employees to eliminate the backlog of cases by June 2020. We are on track to complete all cases by the June 2020 deadline.

ARBA is also completing a business transformation where daily production practices are streamlined to prevent future backlogs. The agency is currently testing a new automated system which will assist in overall production and reporting and tracking of cases. Additionally, the agency is restructuring its work force to address the task to resource requirements. ARBA expects to return to Congressional mandated timelines for FY19 and beyond.

Soldiers for Life

Taking care of Soldiers and their Families while they are in the Army is just one part of our commitment to serving them. For those transitioning from active duty, we continue to support them in a way that reinforces a powerful and enduring identity as lifelong members of the Army team, whether as civilian alumni of Army service or as a "Soldier for Life."

The Army's Soldier for Life program coordinates and collaborates with Army, government, and non-government organizations in order to influence policies, programs and services that support Soldiers, Veterans and Families. Soldier for Life engages all levels of government, private industry, educational institutions and Military and Veteran Support Organizations to enhance the transition process, reduce Veteran unemployment and connect Veterans with services. Soldier for Life creates an environment where Soldiers, Veterans and Families embrace their positive Army experience and return to their communities as Army ambassadors, leaders of character, commitment and service, and inspire others to serve through personal example.

It is in the Army's and our Nation's best interest to ensure Soldiers transition successfully back into our communities. In accordance with the FY19 NDAA, we continue to enhance our policies and procedures to ensure a more individualized approach for transitioning Soldiers. All Soldiers are required to begin the transition process no later than 365 days before the date of their anticipated transition from active duty. For FY19, the Army's Veterans Opportunity to Work (VOW) Act compliance is 89%. According to data from the Department of Labor, in FY19 the Army TAP efforts assisted in reducing the unemployment rate for Veterans that joined the Army after September 11, 2001, to less than 4% (3.4%) for the first time, with the lowest amount of unemployment compensation for Veterans in 19 years. Between FY11 and FY19, Army TAP efforts coupled with the nation's low unemployment rates have contributed to an 86.1% decrease in total Unemployment Compensation for Ex-service members (UCX) payments (\$514.6M to \$71.6M). The FY19 UCX invoice is the lowest since FY00 (\$75.1M).

Soldiers of all ranks, throughout every phase of the military lifecycle, are provided a full range of comprehensive education services by highly competent and caring guidance counselors. Such services include conducting detailed educational needs assessments, academic testing, degree planning and career exploration activities, as

well as counseling on both Tuition Assistance and the new Credentialing Assistance program. These programs enable Soldiers to receive generous Army funding (\$4K/year) for courses from more than 2,000 accredited academic institutions and, hundreds of career enhancing credentials. Voluntary Education and Credentialing Assistance programs have something of value to offer every Soldier, and the degrees and credentials they earn not only help to make them better Soldiers while still serving in the Army, they are also better prepared for life after their military service.

The Career Skills Program (CSP) provides Soldiers the opportunity to participate in first-class apprenticeships, on-the-job training, employment skills training and internships. It also affords Soldiers the opportunity to obtain industry-recognized skills and move into high-demand and highly skilled careers at little to no cost. The Army has over 500 industry partners in the CSP program. In FY19, 4,782 Soldiers completed a CSP, and 4,572 of them received job placement following their training. This is a 95.61% placement rate.

We have invested a tremendous amount of resources and deliberate planning to preserve the All-Volunteer Force. People are the Army...these men and women who serve our Nation, both in and out of uniform, along with their families, are our most important asset. Accordingly, taking care of our people is key to Army readiness, modernization and reform. Army culture is grounded in our enduring values of Loyalty, Duty, Respect, Selfless Service, Honor, Integrity and Personal Courage. Every one of our people has unique talents and abilities they are willing to use in service to our nation, and we owe them the opportunity to do so. Chairman Tillis, Ranking Member Gillibrand, members of this committee, I thank you for generous and unwavering support of our outstanding Soldiers, Civilian Professionals, and their Families.