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Before the

Subcommittee on Personnel

COMMITTEE ON
ARMED SERVICES

UNITED STATES SENATE

HEARING TO RECEIVE TESTIMONY ON DEPARTMENT OF
DEFENSE SINGLE SERVICEMEMBER AND MILITARY FAMILY
READINESS PROGRAMS

Tuesday, February 14, 2017

Washington, D.C.

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6
7 U.S. Senate
8 Subcommittee on Personnel
9 Committee on Armed Services
10 Washington, D.C.
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12 The subcommittee met, pursuant to notice, at 2:30 p.m.
13 in Room SR-222, Russell Senate Office Building, Hon. Thom
14 Tillis, chairman of the subcommittee, presiding.

15 Committee Members Present: Senators Tillis
16 [presiding], McCain, Ernst, Sasse, Gillibrand, Reed,
17 McCaskill, and Warren.
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1 OPENING STATEMENT OF HON. THOM TILLIS, U.S. SENATOR
2 FROM NORTH CAROLINA

3 Senator Tillis: Thanks, everybody. We are going to
4 start these meetings on time and move them pretty
5 efficiently. I appreciate the members being here, and I
6 particularly appreciate the two panels that are before us
7 today.

8 Actually that is the first time I have ever struck a
9 gavel in my political career. I have been doing this for 12
10 years. When I was Speaker of the House, I got to strike the
11 gavel there but never over a committee.

12 I am thrilled to be actually chairing this committee,
13 along with Ranking Member Gillibrand. The ranking member
14 brings ranking member experience from the last 2 years and
15 chair experience prior to that. And I think we are going to
16 work very well together and look forward to working with the
17 other committee members.

18 Just from the standpoint of how I intend to conduct the
19 hearings, we do the early bird rule. For those of you who
20 all know, the people who get here before the strike of the
21 gavel go in the order of seniority, and then as people come
22 in, we will track their position and recognize them in turn.

23 There is only one modification that I have not heard of
24 in the Senate that I would hope that my members would
25 indulge me on. We are going to have rodeo rules, and what

1 rodeo rules means is that after you have gone over 8
2 seconds, we move to the next Senator for speaking.

3 [Laughter.]

4 Senator Tillis: So we buck to the next one. If the
5 next Senator would like to have you continue down the line
6 of questioning, it is their prerogative to yield their time.

7 But the key thing here is in a committee like this, it
8 is so important to get members here, having them know when
9 they can schedule their time to be here when they have so
10 many competing priorities and meetings, that letting them
11 know when they can come here and ask important questions
12 that are under the jurisdiction of this committee. I think
13 we owe it to them to be able to plan properly.

14 So we are excited about the input that we are going to
15 get on defense single service member and family readiness
16 programs.

17 I want to welcome the first panel to have this seasoned
18 group of gentlemen before us. And I especially want to
19 recognize the two spouses who are here with two of our
20 panelists for being here. I have indicated this does not
21 count as a Valentine's date.

22 [Laughter.]

23 Senator Tillis: But it is good to see you with your
24 spouses today because I know in your line of work, that is
25 sometimes challenging.

1 On panel 1, we will hear from Sergeant Major of the
2 Army Daniel Dailey. We will hear from Master Chief Petty
3 Officer of the Navy Steven Giordano, Master Chief Sergeant
4 of the Air Force James Cody, and Sergeant Major of the
5 Marine Corps Ronald Green. And we will just begin from my
6 left to right for opening comments not to exceed 5 minutes.
7 Thank you.

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1 STATEMENT OF SERGEANT MAJOR OF THE ARMY DANIEL A.
2 DAILEY, USA, SERGEANT MAJOR OF THE ARMY

3 Sergeant Dailey: Chairman Tillis, Ranking Member
4 Gillibrand, distinguished members of this subcommittee,
5 thank you for inviting me here today, and thank you for your
6 continued support of the greatest army in the world. I am
7 honored to provide to this committee an update on the
8 current state of single service members and the status of
9 soldier family programs within our Army.

10 First and foremost, I would like to thank this
11 committee for what you did for our Army in last year's
12 Congress. By increasing our end strength, you showed that
13 military readiness is at the forefront of our policies.
14 This decision supports the idea of an agile and ready force
15 that our country needs today more than ever before. We ask
16 that Congress continue to make military readiness a top
17 priority as they have this past year.

18 After visiting and talking with thousands of soldiers
19 and families over the past year, I believe their quality of
20 life is okay. But it is not great now. If we want to
21 continue to retain and attract quality people under the
22 current end strength of an all-volunteer force, we must
23 continue sustainment efforts, as was the case in last year's
24 Congress. We must ensure our military community is properly
25 cared for and resourced. This includes appropriations for

1 equipment, training, and manpower, but also includes a
2 consistent, predictable budget that supports benefits and
3 services throughout the entire lifecycle of a soldier:
4 recruiting, retention, transitioning, and veteran status.

5 The long-term impact is what is concerning. If we
6 continue to be placed in positions where we must choose
7 benefits or training, we will certainly lose out on the
8 quality and talent down the road. Fiscal uncertainty will
9 result in loss of confidence in our institution and
10 ultimately degrade our ability to retain and recruit. We
11 know very well what our Nation expects of us. We will
12 continue to place emphasis on the mission by building
13 readiness, preserving the future of the Army, and caring for
14 our soldiers and their family members.

15 Today our challenge remains the same as it has for the
16 past several years: balancing requirements we have been
17 assigned within the limits of the budget we have been
18 allocated. Having a military is a requirement for the
19 Nation, but it is a choice by individuals today. Therefore,
20 we must ensure our actions and decisions reinforce the
21 message that we are behind our professional all-volunteer
22 force, and I am confident that together that when we are
23 called upon as a Nation our Army will ask and always be
24 ready to assure, deter, and defend the American people and
25 our way of life.

1 I appreciate the opportunity to speak with you today,
2 and I look forward to your questions. Thank you.

3 [The prepared statement of Sergeant Dailey follows:]

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1 STATEMENT OF MASTER CHIEF PETTY OFFICER OF THE NAVY
2 STEVEN S. GIORDANO, USN, MASTER CHIEF PETTY OFFICER OF THE
3 NAVY

4 Chief Giordano: Chairman Tillis, Ranking Member
5 Gillibrand, and distinguished members, I am honored to
6 appear before you today on behalf of the men and women of
7 the United States Navy. Also with me today, as mentioned,
8 is my wife Elka, our Navy's Ombudsman-at-Large.

9 5 months ago, I assumed the duties as the 14th Master
10 Chief Petty Officer of the Navy as the senior enlisted
11 advisor to the Chief of Naval Operations on all matters
12 dealing with our sailors and their families. And throughout
13 my time in service, I have been honored and humbled to serve
14 alongside these courageous patriots, these men and women who
15 are determined, motivated, and unshakable in their devotion
16 to our Nation and our Navy and highly competent in their
17 technical expertise and abilities. With quiet, unassuming
18 courage, these great Americans defend our Nation and its
19 freedoms around the globe in every theater of operation.
20 With this in mind, I believe we share a collective and
21 inherent solemn obligation to ensure their quality of
22 service while supporting and preparing them for the future.

23 Our Navy is at optimal potential when sailors are fully
24 focused on the mission. Taking care of our sailors is key
25 to ensuring the Navy's military readiness. Providing them

1 the ability to devote their full attention and capabilities
2 to the mission at hand is an important factor in
3 successfully executing our design for maintaining maritime
4 superiority, specifically our line of effort to strengthen
5 our Navy team for the future.

6 We are a one Navy team comprised of a diverse mix of
7 active duty, reserve sailors, thousands of Navy civilians,
8 and our collective families with a history of service,
9 sacrifice, and success. I have listened and spoken with
10 many of our sailors and their family members, and I am awed
11 by their high morale and devotion to duty and to one
12 another. The Navy remains resolute in ensuring we deliver
13 the highest quality of service to recruit, train, and retain
14 our best sailors. We strive to meet that demand delivering
15 the proper skills mix to the fleet and improving balance
16 between sea duty and shore duty while at the same time
17 ensuring the families of our service members are taken care
18 of.

19 Our sailors are the most important component of our
20 Navy. We can never take for granted the sacrifices sailors
21 and their families make every day. And on behalf of all of
22 them, I appreciate the opportunity to speak with you on
23 their behalf and to thank you for your unwavering support
24 and commitment to providing the resources necessary to
25 ensure we remain the world's preeminent maritime fighting

1 force.

2 Please accept my written testimony for the record, and
3 I look forward to your questions. Thank you.

4 [The prepared statement of Chief Giordano follows:]

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1 STATEMENT OF SERGEANT MAJOR OF THE MARINE CORPS RONALD
2 L. GREEN, USMC, SERGEANT MAJOR OF THE MARINE CORPS

3 Sergeant Green: Good afternoon, Chairman Tillis,
4 Ranking Member Gillibrand, distinguished members of the
5 subcommittee, I appreciate the opportunity to provide you an
6 update of the commitment of the Marine Corps to our marines
7 and families. With me, I have my wife Andrea who represents
8 all the families around the Corps.

9 The Marine Corps continues to maintain its commitment
10 to the Nation, remaining forward-deployed and ready to
11 respond to crises around the world. With the dynamic pace
12 of current and future demands, our Nation's leaders require
13 and the American people expect your Marines to answer the
14 call, to win, and fight. Thanks to your lasting support and
15 leadership, the Marine Corps has always been the Nation's
16 expeditionary force in readiness. The Marine Corps is
17 dedicated to our essential role as an expeditionary force
18 that Congress and the American people can call on as the
19 most ready when the Nation is least ready.

20 The marines and the Corps are the most sacred resource
21 and always will be. Taking care of marines and their
22 families is a key element of overall readiness and combat
23 effectiveness. The adage "we recruit marines and retain
24 families" remains as true today as ever. Our comprehensive
25 package of programs and services seek the holistic readiness

1 of our marines and families.

2 The Marine Corps is by far your youngest service. The
3 average age is 25. 65 percent are under 25 years of age,
4 and 56 percent are single. As a result of these dynamics,
5 programs to support single marines and their dependents are
6 most important.

7 Our Single Marine Program, as the consolidated voice of
8 all single marines and sailors to the commanders, develops
9 initiatives, programs to enhance morale, recreation,
10 community relations, personal development in order to
11 improve total force readiness, unit cohesion, job
12 performance, and retention within the Marine Corps.

13 The Marine Corps continues to strive to provide robust
14 family readiness services for our marines and families. Our
15 Family Readiness Programs continue to methodically adjust to
16 post-Operation Enduring Freedom and Iraqi Freedom, while
17 also taking into account the unpredictable and demanding
18 operational tempo of the future.

19 Our portfolio of family readiness training programs
20 provide marines, the sailors that serve under the Marine
21 Corps and families with tools and resources needed to
22 successfully meet the challenges of military life and
23 enhance mission readiness by providing preventative
24 services, assistance offered to all.

25 Overall, single marines and families and programs have

1 one overarching goal, to take care of our own and their
2 families. The marines of our Corps represent the American
3 people who have stepped forward and sworn to defend and
4 protect our Nation. By ensuring that we take care of all
5 our marines and families, we fulfill our responsibility to
6 keep the faith with the honor, courage, and commitment they
7 have so freely given.

8 With your support, the Marine Corps will continue to
9 meet the demands of our Nation when it calls.

10 Thank you for the opportunity to appear today, and I
11 look forward to your questions.

12 [The prepared statement of Sergeant Green follows:]

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1 STATEMENT OF CHIEF MASTER SERGEANT OF THE AIR FORCE
2 JAMES A. CODY, USAF, CHIEF MASTER SERGEANT OF THE AIR FORCE
3 Sergeant Cody: Chairman Tillis, Ranking Member
4 Gillibrand, and members of the subcommittee. Thank you for
5 your continued support of the men and women who serve our
6 Nation. I appreciate the opportunity to represent America's
7 airmen and their families, and I am honored to convey their
8 needs and offer appreciation for your support on their
9 behalf.

10 Our job is to support and defend America's way of life,
11 defend our country's borders and national interests, and
12 when absolutely necessary, fight and win our Nation's wars.
13 It is not an easy task, which is why a focus on our airmen
14 and their families is so important. The ultimate source of
15 air, space, and cyberspace combat capabilities reside in the
16 men and women of the U.S. Air Force. It is imperative we
17 put them first, inspire them, and support them as they face
18 the challenges inherent to serving in the profession of
19 arms.

20 The security environment has dramatically evolved over
21 the last 25 years, and the unpredictable landscape we now
22 operate in requires the Air Force to continue to revisit,
23 improve, and evolve our personnel management processes to
24 ensure we better recruit and retain our talented airmen.
25 The Air Force must meet the needs of the warfighter faster,

1 more efficiently, and more effectively.

2 We continue to explore opportunities to strengthen the
3 force. While some initiatives are Air Force-wide, others
4 are more targeted. But all have the same objective. Taken
5 together, they strengthen our competitive position to battle
6 for top talent.

7 To meet the global demands, resource emerging
8 requirements, and repair and sustain the force, the Air
9 Force must increase our active duty end strength up to
10 321,000 by the end of 2017 and up to 350,000 over the next 7
11 years. To do this, we must address mission and readiness
12 demands, increase our accessions and strengthen our
13 retention while never sacrificing quality for quantity.

14 Families are often the catalyst to an airman's decision
15 to stay or leave the Air Force. These selfless families
16 make many sacrifices, and the Air Force remains clear in its
17 commitment to them. Our Airman and Family Readiness Centers
18 serve as a crucial bridge with our families and military
19 missions, encompassing 14 core programs to ensure the
20 resiliency and readiness of airmen and their families.

21 We also rely on our Key Spouses, volunteer family
22 members who are trained on critical family-based programs
23 and other aspects of military life. We continue to expand
24 and build our Key Spouse program, as we recognize its
25 importance to the resilience and health of the family,

1 especially in a time of global uncertainty and continued
2 operational demands on our airmen.

3 Financial stresses significantly impact the resilience
4 of airmen and their families. This is certainly a key
5 factor today as our Nation continues to face fiscal
6 uncertainty which has already eaten at airman's
7 compensation. There are significant concerns as it pertains
8 to the calculus of regular military compensation. We
9 continue to look for ways to improve the personal financial
10 readiness of our force through education with the rollout of
11 the blended retirement system and to ensure airmen and their
12 families are prepared to make educated financial decisions.
13 We are developing comprehensive financial training across
14 the military lifecycle.

15 We are also grateful for the Spouse Education and
16 Career Opportunity program which supports our spouses as
17 they work to overcome the significant challenges of
18 relocation. This support is a significant boon to the
19 employment prospects of our spouses who relocate every few
20 years, but more work must be done. Most notably, spouses
21 with careers that require certification must continually
22 seek and pay for recertification after every move. We must
23 do more to ease the burdens of relocation in this regard on
24 our family members.

25 To ensure we meet the expectations of our families, the

1 Secretary of the Air Force and the Chief of Staff of the Air
2 Force recently conducted a Spouse and Family Forum. We are
3 committed to addressing many of the issues that came up
4 during this forum, including exceptional family member
5 support, spouse employment, school, and deployment support.

6 We focus on our single airmen with the same vigor and
7 intensity we do to our families. To that end, the Air Force
8 created capabilities that focus on the resilience, which has
9 a direct impact on readiness. As just one example, our Air
10 Force Single Airman Program Initiative delivers resilient
11 and readiness capabilities that help revitalize squadrons
12 and optimize airmen performance.

13 Part of the fiscal year 2017 National Defense
14 Authorization Act considers potential changes to our
15 airmen's compensation, specifically as I just mentioned in
16 the form of basic allowance for housing. The aggressive
17 nature of the proposed legislation effectively removes basic
18 allowance for housing as part of regular military
19 compensation which could severely limit our ability to
20 recruit and retain our airmen. This would reverse nearly 20
21 years of deliberate legislation action to ensure service
22 members are appropriately compensated for their service and
23 that their salaries remain competitive with the demand for
24 their talent and acknowledge their service and sacrifice.

25 The talented men and women of the Air Force are called

1 upon each day to perform crucial missions around the world.
2 In every one of those mission areas, airmen are the key to
3 our success. Taking care of those airmen must always be our
4 first priority. Every one of them earn their current pay
5 and compensation. While we remain mindful of the current
6 budget pressures across the Department of Defense, cost-
7 saving needs to be tempered by the need to retain our
8 talent, which is truly a national asset.

9 Undoubtedly, the past few years have been extremely
10 trying for all members of our Air Force, active, Guard,
11 Reserve, and civilian airmen and their families. My wife
12 Athena and I have visited with thousands of airmen and
13 family members over the past year. We have listened to
14 their concerns and witnessed firsthand their passion for
15 service. We both can affirm the impact the current
16 environment and uncertainty has had on our force.

17 I believe you have had the chance to read my written
18 testimony, which includes greater details on the current
19 status of our family programs and our single service member
20 readiness, as well as concerns of our airmen and families.

21 I thank you for your tremendous support and interest in
22 the issues which affect our force, and I look forward to the
23 opportunity to answer your questions.

24 [The prepared statement of Sergeant Cody follows:]

25

1 Senator Tillis: Thank you all, gentlemen. And to your
2 spouses, thank them for their service too because I know, if
3 it is like my job, it is teamwork that makes it possible.

4 The topics we are going to discuss today are vital to
5 the health of our all-volunteer force. We have got a number
6 of stressors, some of which we address. Some of them we may
7 not address in the most efficient manner possible, and a lot
8 of opportunities for, I think, improvement here. I think
9 that the ranking member and I agree.

10 The main thing that we need to focus on, though, is
11 instead of just purely asking you all questions about what
12 we think you need is to make sure that we are listening to
13 you about things that we have not even thought about yet.
14 And some of that will come down to an ongoing dialogue with
15 myself, the ranking member, members of this committee to
16 offer up suggestions for things that we can do better, to be
17 more expedient, more responsive to the needs you think our
18 soldiers, sailors, marines, and airmen all have in common.

19 I want to thank you again for being here today.

20 I also want to defer to Senator Gillibrand for her
21 opening comments before we go to questions.

22 Senator Gillibrand: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I will
23 submit my opening comments for the record.

24 [The prepared statement of Senator Gillibrand follows:]

25 [SUBCOMMITTEE INSERT]

1 Senator Tillis: Then I am going to move very quickly.

2 We have a little bit of a military presence down in
3 North Carolina. Down at Fort Bragg, my wife has taken on a
4 cause called Baby Bundles. Ironically about 9 months after
5 a major deployment, we have a lot of babies born down at
6 Womack. And what we have done is created, you know, this
7 Baby Bundle support for new families. And it is amazing to
8 me. When you get personally involved in that -- this is
9 going into our third year -- you see how under-met the needs
10 are of these young families and single military personnel.
11 So I want to talk just briefly on child care.

12 What are the services doing to expedite the process for
13 employee background checks?

14 Sergeant Dailey: Sir, I can address this. I
15 appreciate the concern you have for our soldier family
16 members and I appreciate the outreach that you do with you
17 and your wife. And that is well received by our family
18 members down at Fort Bragg, sir. So thank you.

19 This is a huge concern for us. One of the key things
20 that enable our family members and a lot of our spouses to
21 seek employment is child care. It is the number one
22 resourced function within MWR in the United States Army by
23 size and scope. And it is critical to our success and it is
24 something we have continue to invest in for the future.

25 We experience a backlog for several reasons. First and

1 foremost, we need additional space. So it is a MILCON issue
2 and we need to seek resources to meet the adequate needs of
3 our soldiers at our major installations.

4 Second is the one you described, sir. It is a backlog
5 of employment, sir. We have been working this very hard. I
6 think we have done an okay job at reducing that amount of
7 backlog, but it is compounded by the simple problem that
8 people often do not want to wait for those background checks
9 and they need to seek employment. We are working very hard
10 through our individuals that conduct backlog to continue to
11 reduce that, and we are allowing more soldiers -- if we
12 cannot meet their needs on post, we are allowing them use
13 funds in order to seek equal opportunities for them to seek
14 child care off post by offsetting the costs.

15 Senator Tillis: Unless the other gentlemen have an
16 adjustment to that, I would like to expand the question just
17 a little bit. You can go back and add onto what the
18 Sergeant Major said. And that would be, have you looked at
19 fully supervised provisional approvals so that you can start
20 addressing the backlog and making sure that we have adequate
21 child care services for our soldiers?

22 Sergeant Green: In the Marine Corps, sir, we have
23 committed more adjudicators to the process. Today we do not
24 have a backlog or wait for employment in our child care
25 process. What we are experiencing is the outside community

1 have adjusted the age that they are taking on kids under 4
2 years of age, and that is causing employment to go
3 elsewhere. So when that backlog was there, we had employers
4 leaving and now it is more competitive to get them to come
5 on base with the salary that the government pays child care
6 providers. That is the problem we are having now.

7 Senator Tillis: Anything to add on the subject?

8 I am also kind of interested in something. We are
9 going to have to submit a number of questions for the record
10 on these topics. One that I would like to talk about in my
11 remaining time is what initiatives the service lines have
12 taken to expand employment opportunities for military
13 spouses. And we will start with Mr. Giordano.

14 Chief Giordano: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

15 If I may in regard to the spouse employment through the
16 child care facilities, you know our Navy has approximately
17 237 CDCs, child development centers, and youth centers
18 across the globe. And we deal from a spouse employment
19 perspective. We allow our spouses the opportunity to
20 basically operate in any of those CDCs. So if a service
21 member PCS and gets to another location that has a CDC, that
22 spouse's credential automatically translate to that other
23 CDC, and they are guaranteed employment into that other
24 location, which has yielded great benefit and removes a
25 little bit of stress for those providers inside the

1 facilities, which also allows for increased capacity because
2 of the number of providers that can easily come on board
3 inside those facilities.

4 Senator Tillis: Thank you.

5 We will submit these so we get consistent answers from
6 each of the lines of service here. Thank you.

7 Chief Giordano: And in regard to the spouse employment
8 piece -- and as you mentioned, my wife is with me. I will
9 share a story which is my wife is a registered nurse, and
10 her license across the State lines has changed a number of
11 times throughout the years. And it presents a challenge for
12 her every time she has got to get a new license and pay for
13 that licensing. And I know that we have taken great steps
14 to try to mitigate that in the services, working with our
15 Department of Labor and our State processes. And we
16 appreciate all those efforts.

17 But the bigger challenge is probably the overseas
18 locations. When our spouses are looking for that employment
19 overseas and they are restricted by the status of forces
20 agreements and things of that nature that might limit those
21 employment opportunities. So I think that the biggest
22 struggle in this is those employment opportunities in
23 overseas environments and what we can do to try to help
24 mitigate those.

25 Senator Tillis: Senator Gillibrand?

1 Senator Gillibrand: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

2 I am also concerned about spouses. Over the past few
3 years, I have requested all files for sexual assault cases
4 from the four major bases, one for each of the services.
5 And one of the issues that came to light was the high number
6 of spouses who are abused. Oftentimes those were cases
7 that, although reported in an unrestricted way, get
8 withdrawn within the first year of the investigation.

9 For these cases of spousal abuse, some of them end up
10 in the family advocacy program and then are included in the
11 yearly SAPRO reports. Do you know why spouses are not
12 surveyed as part of the biennial prevalence survey, and do
13 you recommend they should be? Each one.

14 Sergeant Dailey: Ma'am, I can't answer at this time
15 why they are not surveyed. Of course, I would have to take
16 that for the record.

17 [The information follows:]

18 [SUBCOMMITTEE INSERT]

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1 Sergeant Dailey: With regard to the family advocacy
2 program, there are rules associated with release of that
3 information. I am not referring that to being released to
4 Congress. So I cannot comment right now on whether or not
5 they should be surveyed. I have to take a look at those
6 rules before I make that recommendation.

7 Senator Kaine: That would be great. Thank you.

8 Chief Giordano: The same response.

9 Sergeant Green: The same response, ma'am.

10 Sergeant Cody: Ma'am, I think we do include them if
11 they do report. But to your point on the survey, I just do
12 not know that we have expanded that aperture --

13 Senator Gillibrand: They are only included if they
14 filed an unrestricted report, but they are not surveyed. So
15 the survey is an estimate because all service members take
16 it. So when we say last year there were 20,000 cases of
17 sexual assault, unwanted sexual contact, and other sexual
18 abuse, they survey the members and they extrapolate from
19 that. So if they are not being surveyed -- in one year that
20 we looked at it, more than half of the cases were spouses.
21 So that would mean if they are not being surveyed and there
22 is no estimate, that 20,000 number is not accurate because
23 they are not actually being surveyed to be part of the
24 prevalence survey.

25 So I would urge you to look at what is happening in

1 your own services and make recommendations because I would
2 like to include them in the survey. So we are thinking on
3 what would make sense, how it would make sense because we
4 are just not capturing the data. And then when they
5 withdraw from the prosecution of the case, then you do not
6 even know why they withdrew because once they are out of the
7 system, they are out of the system. And it may go to the 62
8 percent retaliation rate. I mean, spouses might be uniquely
9 positioned that they easily get retaliated against because
10 it is against their spouse.

11 Related, I am also worried about child abuse. And
12 there is a number of cases that are really heartbreaking.
13 When there is a child abuse case, it gets reported to the
14 family advocacy program, but again, that then is not
15 prosecuted, is not treated as such. So I will give you just
16 a couple examples.

17 The DOD instruction 6400 states that commanders are
18 responsible for ensuring alleged military abusers are held
19 accountable for their conduct through appropriate
20 disposition under the UCMJ and/or administrative
21 regulations, as appropriate. This does not appear to be
22 happening.

23 And two examples. 2015, a 14-week-old baby, Kiley
24 Houston, died from suffocation in their soiled crib on board
25 the Naval Air Station New Orleans. And a 20-month-old, Ryan

1 Ott, drowned in pond while his mother and her boyfriend, a
2 military police officer at Fort Bragg, snorted prescription
3 tranquilizers. In each case, the abuser's commander either
4 knew or should have known of the abuse that led to each
5 child's death and no military justice action was taken.

6 What is your recommendations about how to fix the
7 system?

8 Sergeant Cody: So, ma'am, I will start. So obviously
9 horrific situations and crimes. From an Air Force
10 perspective, when we aware of those crimes, we do prosecute
11 and we can certainly provide an example of that. When child
12 abuse is brought or neglect is brought to our attention, if
13 it does fall within the purview of the UCMJ, we have done so
14 and held people accountable, as well as work with child
15 protective services to ensure that the child -- in the event
16 that it is not a catastrophic loss because of their death
17 type of thing. But we do do that. So it is unfortunate
18 when things slip through, but I know we do vigorously
19 prosecute these crimes when they are brought to our
20 attention.

21 Chief Giordano: If I may. You know, from a Navy
22 perspective, again I am not familiar with those two cases,
23 but I think our Navy, our leadership, does a phenomenal job
24 in holding --

25 Senator Gillibrand: Well, let me just give you a proof

1 point why I am so concerned. In 2015, FAP counted 5,378
2 child abuse and neglected victims in military families, but
3 claimed they only received reports on approximately 25
4 percent of the cases. So there are a lot more cases that
5 wind up getting to criminal justice.

6 My time has expired. So if you want to submit fuller
7 answers to the record. We just have to deal with the fact
8 that only 25 percent of the cases are typically reported,
9 and it may be a process problem that we could fix.

10 Senator Tillis: Senator Ernst?

11 Senator Ernst: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

12 And, gentlemen, it is good to see you here today.

13 And I echo Senator Tillis' comments and thoughts that
14 this does not count as a date, and neither does going
15 through the drive-thru on the way home. So make sure you
16 treat your spouses appropriately on Valentine's Day.

17 Sergeant Major Dailey, I would like to start with you.
18 And I do appreciate the testimony that has been given by
19 each of you today on a number of the programs that are
20 available to help our families. It is very important
21 because that allows us to strengthen our military.

22 But I am not only concerned about those that are
23 currently serving and will continue to serve in the future,
24 but those that are transitioning out of our services as
25 well.

1 So just a few years ago, I was an active duty spouse of
2 one of the Army's finest NCOs. And during that time, I
3 worked for a transition assistance program at Fort Benning.
4 And in that program, we were able to assist soldiers as they
5 left the military. We helped them find jobs, whether it was
6 in the local community or in their home States if they chose
7 to return to those home States.

8 So, Sergeant Major, if you could talk a little bit
9 about the transition assistance programs that continue to
10 need support, but why those are so important and what we can
11 do better to assist our services in those transition
12 assistance programs.

13 Sergeant Dailey: Senator, I would be happy to. This
14 is an area, Senator Ernst, distinguished members of the
15 panel, that I would like to talk about that I think we have
16 gotten right for the last several years. As you describe,
17 we need to continue because it is a constant effort that we
18 need to continue to provide for our young soldiers as they
19 leave the service.

20 But we have invested in this heavily. With the new
21 Soldier for Life program -- we turned this on about 3 or 4
22 years ago -- we recognized the absence of providing adequate
23 transition services to our young service members and their
24 families as they left the service. And it really is an
25 investment in our future. It is an investment that tells

1 America that we believe in these young men and women and
2 they are valued enough to invest in them for the future.
3 And we have worked things like our career skills programs
4 throughout our institution partnering with our great
5 organizations outside of our gates to help us provide them
6 with the necessary skills. We have instituted credentialing
7 programs to give credentials to those soldiers where their
8 job skills in the military translate to civilian sectors to
9 provide them jobs. And those efforts since 2008, ma'am,
10 have reduced our unemployment compensation from over \$500
11 million a year to approximately \$172 million this year.

12 So I agree that we need to continue to do this and we
13 need to continue to find ways to credential our young men
14 and women so they fill those valuable spots that they can
15 seize in today's job market.

16 Senator Ernst: That is fantastic.

17 The credentialing -- is that done through our Army
18 university or are there other methods of credentialing?

19 Sergeant Dailey: Currently, ma'am, because of the work
20 that Congress did for us last year, we have the
21 authorization to credential soldiers that are within the MOS
22 that they hold currently in the Army, and those credentials
23 match civilian occupations in the civilian sector.

24 I think where there is future potential to expand that
25 capability, as you describe -- and I do not think we are

1 done with our efforts -- we can allow soldiers to elect
2 credentials. The preponderance of the soldiers in our Army
3 serve in combat MOSs, and their job skills do not directly
4 translate to civilian sector jobs. And I think this is an
5 opportunity, a vacancy that we can find an opportunity to
6 help our soldiers and continue to provide them with the
7 necessary skills they need to be successful as they
8 transition from Soldiers for Life.

9 Senator Ernst: Fantastic.

10 Any other comments?

11 Sergeant Green: Yes, ma'am. I will give you some
12 examples of how this process is working. We partnered with
13 Microsoft. Actually they host a 16-week program aboard
14 three major installations, and upon completion, they
15 actually invite the marines in to actually do interviews for
16 jobs. If they are not picked up by Microsoft, they make an
17 interview for other IT industries who have picked up on
18 this. And eventually they will have a place of employment.

19 We partner with the Department of Energy for solar. We
20 have a 16-week solar program, along with the enrollers in
21 the American Aluminum program and we have 16-week program.
22 It has been going for about 8 years at Camp Pendleton. It
23 just came on board about 2 years ago at Camp Lejeune. So
24 there are numerous programs out there and organizations that
25 are getting the process. And like Sergeant Major Dailey

1 said, this is a good news story.

2 Senator Ernst: It is very good.

3 Any other comments?

4 Sergeant Cody: Ma'am, I would just add on to what they
5 said as an airman that is 3 days away from that transition
6 himself. So I fully appreciate the impact of this.

7 We are doing a lot, but I think the challenge and the
8 disconnect quickly comes in this idea. And it goes to this
9 financial education that I am talking about and the
10 realization of the compensation and what they have been
11 doing for their country and the lifestyle that they and
12 their family have become accustomed to and have earned and
13 then transitioning those skills into somewhere where they
14 can actually do the same thing. And because we do things a
15 little different -- you know, there is some magic math that
16 takes place on how we compensate the military and account
17 for all of that.

18 I think the challenge is people separate because there
19 are a lot of jobs out there. If we can get them
20 credentialed where they can get those jobs that are
21 comparable, you are in. But if you are not, they are not
22 going to take those jobs because they cannot afford to. So
23 that is where I think we still have work to do is to really
24 bridge that gap working with the Department of Labor,
25 crossing State lines on those things. There is lots of

1 opportunity to get this better, not that we have not put a
2 lot of good effort into it.

3 Senator Ernst: That is fantastic. And thank you and
4 congratulations.

5 This is just an important point for those of us that
6 are here is making sure that not only do we value those
7 service members who are currently on inactive status, but
8 that we value what they have given to our Nation as they
9 move into their next career. So thank you, gentlemen, very
10 much.

11 Senator Tillis: Senator Warren?

12 Senator Warren: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

13 I just want to say how delighted I am. I am the newest
14 member of this committee and looking forward to serving with
15 you as chair and with our ranking member and doing the hard
16 work that this committee should be doing.

17 So I wanted to follow up on Senator Ernst's question
18 and see if I can just dig in a little bit more and make sure
19 I understand this.

20 Each of you is responsible for communicating the
21 concerns of enlisted personnel up the chain of command. So
22 you know, as well as anyone, that the vast majority of our
23 enlisted service members transition out of service before
24 they reach their 20 years. And when they leave, they need
25 to be able to find these civilian jobs.

1 You know, this transition, I recognize, can be really
2 difficult even for highly trained and experienced personnel.
3 And I just want to ask a couple of questions about why that
4 is so.

5 Sergeant Major Dailey, the Army trains thousands of
6 soldiers every year to drive trucks in the most difficult
7 conditions, in combat, with hazardous cargo, at night in
8 sandstorms. You name it. If it is tough, you train people
9 to do it. So would you say those folks are pretty good
10 truck drivers?

11 Sergeant Dailey: I am saying in my opinion they are
12 the best in the world, ma'am.

13 Senator Warren: Best truck drivers in the world. That
14 sounds like an expert opinion on that.

15 So with those kinds of skills, when they transition
16 from the Army, it is reasonable to assume that they could
17 pretty much sign on with any long-haul trucking company and
18 hit the interstate the next day. Right?

19 Sergeant Dailey: That is correct, ma'am.

20 Senator Warren: And they can?

21 Sergeant Dailey: Not fully, ma'am, no.

22 Senator Warren: No, they cannot. How come?

23 Sergeant Dailey: Ma'am, it is a complicated matter.
24 First and foremost, one, we have to credential them, those
25 young men and women. Two is we have to work the

1 requirements for each and every one of the 54 States and
2 territories that license those trucks, ma'am.

3 Senator Warren: So we have got a State, a national
4 licensing problem here. And we cannot take the world's best
5 truck drivers and just automatically move them into truck
6 driving jobs. Right? Civilian truck driving jobs. Okay.

7 Let me ask another one. Chief Cody, I know that you
8 got your start as an air traffic controller. I did my
9 homework. And the Air Force trains thousands of air traffic
10 controllers every single year. These airmen are responsible
11 for the safety of aircraft worth millions of dollars, not to
12 mention the lives of their crews, that they often direct
13 traffic in the most hazardous possible situations. Is that
14 correct?

15 Sergeant Cody: Yes, ma'am.

16 Senator Warren: All right. It sounds very
17 challenging. Surely these individuals can walk out of the
18 Air Force and fill an opening at a low-key domestic airport
19 when they separate from the services.

20 Sergeant Cody: So they can.

21 Senator Warren: You would like them to be able to.
22 Can they? Can they get fully credentialed? So they right
23 now are fully credentialed and able to do that? Any airman
24 can leave?

25 Sergeant Cody: So for us in the Air Force -- and this

1 goes back to 32 years-plus for me -- we have been given that
2 authority from the get-go. So when we graduate our
3 training, we have an FAA certificate, which is what is
4 required to be a CTO, control tower operator. So any air
5 traffic controller that has received that can go and apply.
6 Now, they have to compete with everybody else. Post 9/11,
7 the FAA changed their hiring rules for controllers that were
8 over the age limit. Age limit is the biggest factor for us.

9 Senator Warren: But we have set up at the federal
10 level a licensing program. So once you have gotten that
11 training, you just take it and you come out and you slip
12 right into at least the competition for the civilian jobs.

13 Sergeant Cody: Exactly.

14 Senator Warren: Very helpful. Thank you very much.

15 Master Chief Giordano, let me ask. Enlisted sailors
16 operate and maintain some of the most sophisticated
17 equipment in the world. They are trusted and trained to
18 respond in any number of crisis situations. So surely these
19 personnel are able to obtain civilian certifications and
20 licenses at their service jobs. Is that right or not?

21 Chief Giordano: To an extent, ma'am. We have about 80
22 enlisted ratings in the Navy, and we offer every sailor at
23 least one opportunity to earn a credential in each one of
24 those ratings. But the unfortunate thing is those ratings
25 encompass a number of different skill sets. So our Navy is

1 driving to reinvent our training pipeline to where we can
2 train to a specific skill set in each one of those ratings
3 and then get to a credentialing opportunity so that they
4 will have that expertise as they do make that transition.

5 Senator Warren: And then like the Air Force expertise,
6 will it be a credential that will be recognized in all 50
7 States, or are you going to have to negotiate or, as you
8 say, 54 different jurisdictions that you have to negotiate?

9 Chief Giordano: A path that we will have to cross,
10 Senator.

11 Senator Warren: I think that sounds like 54.

12 But thank you. Look, I know that we have made progress
13 in this area in part thanks to the former First Lady's
14 Joining Forces Initiative. I know you all have worked on
15 that. And I definitely do not want to change or lower
16 civilian certification standards. That is not the problem
17 here. But it seems to me that America spends hundreds of
18 millions of dollars each year to train our service members
19 to do these highly skilled jobs. We train them to do these
20 jobs with precision, to do them without mistakes, to do them
21 in active combat situations, and I believe they should be
22 ready to move into civilian life with those certifications.

23 What concerns me right now is that too many service
24 members are being roped into expensive credentialing
25 programs by predatory, for-profit colleges that are looking

1 to get a hold of those military benefits and make a profit
2 off them. And I just want to work on making it easier for
3 our service members, when they leave the service, to have
4 that credential in hand and know that that credential is
5 going to be recognized in all relevant 54 jurisdictions. I
6 think we can fix this problem, and I look forward to working
7 with you on it. Thank you.

8 Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

9 Senator Tillis: Thank you, Senator Warren. Senator
10 Warren, I suspect there are going to be one or two policy
11 matters on a broader base that we may not see eye to eye on,
12 but on the line of questioning you just had, there is a lot
13 of -- after we defer -- you know, Chairman McCain announced
14 that we are going to have a rodeo roll here in the committee
15 where after 8 seconds, we buck people to the next committee.
16 Of course, that was before I knew the chairman was going to
17 stop in.

18 [Laughter.]

19 Senator Tillis: So Chairman McCain.

20 Chairman McCain: I thank you, Mr. Chairman. I thank
21 you and Senator Gillibrand for your focus on the personnel
22 issues that are obviously vital to our Nation's defense.

23 I do not want to interrupt the proceedings. I would
24 just like to ask one question of our distinguished leaders.
25 Anything I ever learned about leadership I learned from a

1 master chief petty officer, and I thank you especially Chief
2 Petty Officer Giordano.

3 As we know, 25 percent of military spouses in the labor
4 force are unemployed. Many are under-employed. Obviously,
5 the movement of our military personnel makes it extremely
6 difficult for spouses to hold employment and jobs. My only
7 question I would have, Mr. Chairman, is maybe our witnesses
8 could describe how we are trying to address that challenge.
9 Maybe we could begin with you, Command Master Chief Cody.

10 Sergeant Cody: Yes, Senator. Thanks for the
11 opportunity to address this.

12 So I think we are making some inroads here, but the
13 previous discussion you will see in the record is we do need
14 to work on this ability of licensing and the transferability
15 of that. We have done some work here. So I want to be
16 respectful in the fact that there has been an effort to
17 create the ability to have some time frame -- right -- so
18 you can seek employment, given some time to get he
19 credentialing done or licensing done for that State.

20 Chairman McCain: Would that require approval or
21 legislation on the part of States?

22 Sergeant Cody: It is going to require collaboration
23 between the States. Yes, sir. Absolutely. I mean, that is
24 essential to this.

25 And I do think there is a way ahead. We did this with

1 education. We came up with the Military Coalition Act where
2 we kind of worked with every State to say, hey, with
3 children that are going to transfer from school to school, a
4 baseline of what they will accept so our children would not
5 be taking a step back with every State that they went into
6 and getting behind.

7 But something similar to that nature where there is at
8 least some type of baseline foundation where everybody
9 fundamentally agrees that in this transition time, we are
10 going to accept things as long as they meet some minimum
11 level, to Chairman Tillis' point, you know, some level of
12 supervised ability to get employment, understanding it will
13 take time.

14 And I do think we have a responsibility to take on the
15 cost of that, help with the cost of that through some type
16 of offset because it is very expensive for some of these
17 licensing and credentialing across State lines. It makes it
18 prohibitive when you are talking about a 2- to 3-year move
19 ratio. It is almost cost prohibitive.

20 Sergeant Green: Yes, sir. Good afternoon, sir.

21 Chairman McCain: We are calling on the communities to
22 help.

23 Sergeant Green: Yes, sir. I agree, sir.

24 Two things from the Marine Corps. Number one, we are
25 looking at our programs and seeing how we can further align

1 with the States. We felt maybe we could teach them some
2 things in our curriculum, one or two things that actually
3 will parse out what the differences are in that licensing
4 process. We tried it with a few MOSs. And the industry out
5 there -- they actually accepted that. So some of it just
6 going through our curriculums.

7 The other part of it is the language is different. Of
8 course, truck drivers can drive, but some of it is just how
9 we write the language in our system, going back and taking a
10 look at that and rewriting it. And that has been successful
11 for us in some cases.

12 Another thing is for the Marine Corps -- we are so
13 young. We move pretty often. We are looking at the model
14 that we move on and the number of years we move families,
15 looking to keep them more stabilized in this environment we
16 are in. So that is helping us as well.

17 Chief Giordano: Thank you for the question, Senator,
18 and the compliment as well. I appreciate it.

19 You know, I would say that one of the issues we have
20 from a spouse employment base is also access to the things
21 that are readily available today. And that is where we are
22 at, I think in a little state of play with the Navy, is
23 aligning all those things to make sure that spouses
24 understand how they can access these things, whether it is
25 access to scholarship opportunities or whether it is access

1 to figure out how to link to a partner that we have through
2 our SECO initiatives in those hiring practices or how to
3 speak -- when they go into a fleet and family service center
4 to speak to a counselor that talks about our Hiring Our
5 Heroes programs. So getting that access and that
6 information to the family members is critical in this.

7 And the other piece that I mentioned earlier I think
8 that is even more important or as important, as we cross
9 State lines within the continental U.S., is the employment
10 outside of the U.S. in the other areas that we find our
11 spouses trying to gain employment and have limited
12 opportunity for employment.

13 Sergeant Dailey: Senator McCain, thanks for the
14 opportunity and thank you for the question.

15 I think this is important not just advocating for
16 soldiers, but all of us here have lived this with our
17 spouses as we moved probably seven dozen times or more
18 combined. And this is important because we know the
19 stability in the family makes for better soldiers, sailors,
20 airmen, and marines, and we proved that over time.

21 And I think that we have done a lot of great work. In
22 the area of the MSEP, the Military Spouse Employment
23 Program. And we have asked people outside our gates to help
24 us with this, partnering with hundreds of non-government
25 agencies that produce thousands of employment opportunities

1 for our spouses for the last several years. And I think we
2 need to continue to strengthen that in every way, shape, and
3 form we can.

4 One of the things I think we can improve on is what
5 MPCON just talked about is internal and external
6 communication in both forms, talking to our spouses about
7 the availability of these type of programs and having them
8 exercise these resources and to continue to talk to our
9 partners outside of our gates of our installations, talk to
10 them about the value that they bring because, as you
11 mentioned, sir, many times they are more educated but they
12 are getting less salary for the work that they are doing.

13 And lastly, I believe that we can resource our internal
14 resources. Over the last several years, we have done great
15 work with regard to finding education and training
16 opportunities that enhance job opportunities for our young
17 soldiers, sailors, airmen, and marines as they exit the
18 service. And with the appropriate resourcing for these
19 things, we can easily extend these services to our families
20 as well.

21 Chairman McCain: I thank you, Mr. Chairman.

22 I think this is an issue and maybe we ought to look at
23 -- if an individual is credentialed or licensed to work in
24 one State, maybe we could look at making the licensing
25 applicable in other States. I hope we would look at that.

1 I thank you, Mr. Chairman. I thank you, Senator
2 Gillibrand.

3 Senator Tillis: Thank you.

4 Ranking Member Reed?

5 Senator Reed: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman, for
6 holding this hearing.

7 Thank you, gentlemen, for your service. My sense is
8 that the greatest force multiplier we have in our military
9 forces is the non-commissioned officers. So go back and
10 tell your other NCOs the great job they are doing for all of
11 us.

12 Chairman McCain: And the absence of leadership from
13 West Point.

14 [Laughter.]

15 Senator Reed: That is right.

16 I do not know if the chairman found this out at
17 Annapolis, but they taught us very early before we did
18 anything, check with the 1st sergeant. If he said it was
19 cool, then do it. It at least got me through without major
20 incident.

21 Anyway, one of the issues that I discovered, as
22 probably the chairman did and others, on active service is
23 financial problems complicate life so dramatically for
24 service men and women. I saw something that really was
25 staggering. According to the DOD, every time we separate a

1 service member, it costs the Department \$57,000. The
2 Department estimates that each year somewhere between 4,700
3 and 8,000 service members are involuntary separated due to
4 financial hardship. That is a staggering amount of money,
5 and it is totally avoidable I think.

6 One thing we have tried to do -- and I want to thank
7 the chairman and all my colleagues -- is the Military
8 Lending Act ensured that real protections for service men
9 and women and families. And in addition to that, what we
10 have done is when we created the Consumer Financial
11 Protection Bureau, we specifically put in an Office of
12 Service Members Affairs, which has been led until recently
13 by Holly Petraeus. And I am just wondering if you can give
14 us any sort of on-the-ground feedback about is it helping.
15 Do we need to do more? What else can we do? I will start
16 just because it is the Army, just because he is there.
17 Okay? Sergeant Dailey?

18 Sergeant Dailey: Senator Reed, thanks for the
19 question. I would be happy to share with you my experience
20 with the organization, which you described and which
21 previously was led by Ms. Holly Petraeus.

22 We have scheduled meetings with her on frequency in the
23 past. She has easily described the benefit that she
24 provided to our soldiers in the ways of protecting and
25 making sure they were not being aggressively pursued by

1 predatory lenders. So I cannot speak for the specific
2 numbers, but I know it is a substantial amount of help that
3 was provided by that organization for our soldiers.

4 This also increased our internal agencies that provide
5 assistance. So now soldiers are no longer going with those
6 predatory lenders. They are now using things like the Army
7 Emergency Relief Fund, which is a nonprofit organization
8 governed by the military service or oversight by the
9 military service that provides low and no-cost interest
10 loans to our soldiers. So I see value in that organization
11 and I know that they have done great things for our service
12 members.

13 Senator Reed: Chief?

14 Chief Giordano: Thank you, Senator.

15 You know I know that our sailors think about when they
16 get the calls from debt collectors, they think about
17 mortgages, and they think about interest rates, high
18 interest rates. And what we can do to try to help mitigate
19 that or provide them education up front to work through all
20 that -- and like my battle buddy here, the sergeant major, I
21 have also met with Holly Petraeus prior to her retirement.
22 And I had the opportunity to speak with them about services
23 that are provided and the education that is provided to our
24 service members.

25 And something that we spoke about just recently is, you

1 know, we have this thing called the Misadventures of Money
2 Management that we provide to those personnel that are in
3 our delayed entry programs to kind of start them upfront on
4 education in those regards, so things that later may affect
5 them in life that they may not understand. And the idea is
6 educate them early before they even get into an institution
7 that may affect them later on, involuntary separation or
8 clearance matters that may affect money matters. So we have
9 worked hand in hand with them. We continue a weekly battle
10 rhythm with the office to continue to figure out any support
11 they can provide in the realm of financial literacy.

12 Senator Reed: Thank you.

13 Sergeant Major?

14 Sergeant Green: I echo my battle buddies here. We are
15 the last one to come on board. I was reading this morning
16 on the treadmill, sir, the Misadventures of Money
17 Management. We actually tied it into our program for our
18 policy for the blended retirement system which we will roll
19 out on 1 March and we will start to capture those members as
20 well. This is a great program, a great tutorial, and
21 starting with the delayed entry program is the right place
22 to start. We know that.

23 Senator Reed: Thank you very much.

24 Sergeant Cody?

25 Sergeant Cody: Senator Reed, thanks.

1 So I think all of us have who have spent time with
2 Holly Petraeus would have the same opinion of any agency out
3 there specifically focused on supporting service members and
4 their families, and helping them make decisions is good for
5 the military. It is good for them.

6 So the only thing I think I would share with you on
7 this, especially as we talk about this blended retirement
8 stuff -- we are talking a lot about military compensation
9 and looking at all this, adnd to your point, money is a huge
10 factor in just the sustainability of a family and a
11 lifestyle -- is this idea that we are never going to be
12 experts within the Department of Defense on this type of
13 money management. It is not what the American people expect
14 us to do. This becomes a personal thing. But the dynamics
15 and the lifestyles that we expect our people to live in are
16 dramatically different than anybody else in the Nation.

17 So having these relationships and available services
18 outside where they are resources to us is extremely
19 important because they are experts. Having access to the
20 experts that can help us through understanding what this
21 fully means to a young person, upon their retirement, how
22 that changes I think is better because their sole focus is
23 on that, and our sole focus cannot be on that. It has to be
24 doing what we do for the Nation.

25 Again, I think they have done great stuff from that

1 office particularly. I think that is the only thing we can
2 speak to because that is our interaction with the agency.
3 But no question, we need something like that to leverage as
4 a support structure for those that serve because realizing
5 the predominance -- you know, the sergeant major talked
6 earlier -- of the age of the people that come into the
7 military and the lack of education they have on finances.
8 So having them embed into school systems and better educate
9 people like we are doing, if you start off a little bit
10 better, you have a better chance of finishing.

11 Senator Reed: Thank you very much. If there is
12 anything else you think we can do along these lines, please
13 let us know. And thank you for your service and thank the
14 soldiers, sailors, airmen, and marines that you so ably
15 represent. Thank you.

16 Senator Tillis: Thank you, Senator Reed.

17 Just some closing comments before we move to the next
18 panel. Senator Reed?

19 Senator Reed: Can I, with unanimous consent, submit my
20 statement?

21 Senator Tillis: Without objection.

22 [The prepared statement of Senator Reed follows:]

23 [SUBCOMMITTEE INSERT]

24

25

1 Senator Reed: Thank you.

2 Senator Tillis: The point -- before I was Senator, I
3 was Speaker of the House in North Carolina. We moved some
4 legislation I think is very important. I would like to get
5 feedback from all of you all in follow-up form for States
6 that are doing a particularly good job of making this
7 crosswalk available. Sergeant Major Green, you had a very
8 good point. We need to look at the MOSs and the definition
9 of jobs that we have to make sure they best crosswalk to,
10 say, industry standards for positions like CDLs in North
11 Carolina. We did express permitting for CDLs. We did what
12 we called Brass to Class so that we could have officers come
13 in and move into a public school classroom on a lateral
14 entry basis. It would be helpful to get an inventory of the
15 States that are getting some of those policies right so that
16 that can be instructive in things that we can to do
17 encourage other States to get up to that same level and
18 maybe provide some incentive for doing that.

19 Mr. Cody -- or I should say Master Chief -- I would
20 like to thank you for your service. I think this may be the
21 last time you come before this committee. I want to thank
22 you and your family, and on behalf of all the military
23 families and people serving, thank you so much for your
24 leadership and commitment to taking care of our men and
25 women in uniform. And I would just ask -- you still look

1 pretty young. Make sure you do not have the ear buds in the
2 transition meeting, not listening to all the things you can
3 take advantage of in transition and come out of that
4 transition process transition-literate. And that is the
5 last thing I will leave you with.

6 We are also very curious about the majority of men and
7 women who go into the armed services are going to leave at
8 some point far earlier than retirement age. And as a member
9 of the Veterans Affairs Committee, I would also like to get
10 your input on things that we can do better to glue together
11 the DOD and Veterans so that we make sure that these
12 soldiers know what they have available to them and we also
13 have very clear vision into challenges that they may face so
14 that we can do the best job of serving them after they have
15 served us.

16 Thank you all for your time on the committee, and we
17 appreciate your feedback on the follow-up questions.

18 The next committee, while we are doing a transition and
19 changing the nameplates -- I want to welcome the second
20 panel before the committee here and introduce the speakers.
21 We have Acting Assistant Secretary of Defense for Manpower
22 and Reserve Affairs, Ms. Stephanie Barna. We have Kathy
23 Roth-Douquet, CEO of the Blue Star Families, and we have
24 Joyce Raezer, Executive Director of the National Military
25 Family Association. Thank you all for being here. And

1 consistent with the first panel, we will have you, if you
2 could, have opening comments of about 5 minutes. And please
3 feel free to submit your comments for the record, and then
4 we will go to questions. And we will start with Ms. Roth-
5 Douquet.

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1 STATEMENT OF KATHY ROTH-DOUQUET, CHIEF EXECUTIVE
2 OFFICER, BLUE STAR FAMILIES

3 Ms. Roth-Douquet: Thank you so much. Senator Tillis,
4 Senator Gillibrand, I really appreciate you having us here
5 today and I appreciated that earlier session too. We know
6 that you all care about us, and that makes a big difference
7 to all the service members and their families.

8 Blue Star Families builds communities that support
9 military families and connects them to their civilian
10 neighbors. We believe all military families members ought
11 to be able to both serve their Nation and see their families
12 thrive.

13 One of the ways we do our work is through research that
14 finds the current problems facing military families and
15 works with partners on those solutions. Our annual military
16 family lifestyle survey is nationally recognized as a yearly
17 snapshot. It is the largest and most comprehensive survey
18 of active duty, veterans, and their families in the country.
19 It is released annually with the House and Senate military
20 family caucuses, and it is used broadly by the White House,
21 Congress, Department of Defense, State and local officials,
22 foundations and other nonprofits.

23 So what I would like to talk to you about is what we
24 learned in this year's survey, which was released in
25 December, which is that we see a military community at a

1 point of inflection. The all-volunteer force and our
2 military personnel system was not designed for our current
3 security situation of low-intensity conflict over time for a
4 force that is educated, married, and living in a society
5 that is increasingly diverse and inclusive, and increasingly
6 middle class families require two incomes to maintain
7 lifestyle and create opportunities for their children.

8 Rather than ad hoc measures meant to provide support
9 during periods of acute warfare, military families need to
10 be understood as a structure, a part of the structure of the
11 force. Military family readiness programs alone cannot be
12 the answer. Families are part of recruitment, retention,
13 readiness, and reintegration and need to be structured as
14 such in a way they currently are not.

15 I am honored to help lead an effort with the Bipartisan
16 Policy Center examining the impact of military family policy
17 on readiness and national security. Our upcoming report,
18 which we will be presenting here to the full SASC committee
19 will demonstrate how military family readiness is part of
20 our national security.

21 When DOD maintains policies that categorize military
22 families purely as quality of life issues, it does not get
23 us to where we need to be.

24 You have most of my remarks for the record. I just
25 want to highlight that when we ask the open-ended response

1 to service members' families, what is that DOD could do to
2 make the biggest difference for you in your lives today, the
3 number one written-in response was child care. It is
4 important to note that two-thirds of families do not have
5 child care to meet their needs.

6 Number two was health care.

7 Number three was operational tempo. Nearly three-
8 quarters of the families in our survey said that the current
9 operational tempo is unhealthy and unsustainable for them,
10 and more than 4 in 10 had had more than 6 months of family
11 separation in the last year and a half. I think our
12 civilian neighbors are unaware of how hard we are working.

13 And finally, spouse employment is a bit of a silver
14 bullet issue we feel. So many stresses are economic, as you
15 mentioned, and financial. Military families' median income
16 -- service members' income is \$45,000 a year. You cannot
17 reach the American dream of a middle class lifestyle without
18 two incomes. And there is more that we can do to solve that
19 problem.

20 [The prepared statement of Ms. Roth-Douquet follows:]

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1 Senator Tillis: Thank you.

2 Ms. Barna?

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1 STATEMENT OF STEPHANIE BARNA, ACTING ASSISTANT
2 SECRETARY OF DEFENSE FOR MANPOWER AND RESERVE AFFAIRS

3 Ms. Barna: Chairman Tillis, Ranking Member Gillibrand,
4 I appreciate the opportunity to be with you today, together
5 with Ms. Roth-Douquet and Ms. Raezer of the National
6 Military Family Association.

7 The Department works closely and collaboratively with
8 both Blue Star Families and with NMFA on a regular basis,
9 and both have provided us with unflagging support in our
10 efforts to improve the quality of life of our military
11 personnel, our families, and to ensure military family
12 readiness.

13 Our nearly 3 million military family members may not
14 wear a uniform, but they do serve and they do sacrifice. We
15 believe that our single service member and military family
16 programs are absolutely essential to maintaining the
17 readiness of our armed forces. And with your support, we
18 back that belief with an investment of effort, of ingenuity,
19 and dollars.

20 The commitment starts at the very top echelon of the
21 Department of Defense. In his statement before the Senate
22 Armed Services Committee considering his nomination,
23 Secretary Mattis said I will hold service members,
24 civilians, and their families foremost in my thoughts and
25 give them the best chance for victory.

1 In his first message to the entirety of the Department
2 of Defense as our Secretary, he called out the uniformed and
3 civilian members of the Department and their families
4 saying, you are representative of the fundamental unity of
5 our country.

6 And in his very first tasking to my office, he asked,
7 tell me what this Department is doing for our military
8 families and what we can and will do better.

9 The challenges inherent in the military profession,
10 deployments, operations, training, and the mobile military
11 lifestyle impose great burdens on our military families. In
12 the Department, we analyze measures like OPTEMPO and
13 PERSTEMPO, but to our military families, these mean only one
14 thing, that their loved one is gone again. We believe that
15 military families need and deserve our continuous support no
16 matter the reason for a service member's absence.

17 And some have concluded that as our commitments shift
18 in Iraq and Afghanistan and as many of our service members
19 return home, that the need for robust military family
20 programs and services has abated. We believe it is quite
21 the opposite. Periods of readjustment and periods of
22 reintegration are actually among the most stressful in our
23 military families, and they require our continuous
24 attention, our caring, our support, and our investment.

25 The Department will continue to prioritize support for

1 service members and their families by providing and
2 resourcing quality of life and military family readiness for
3 our people. As the needs of our service members and their
4 families change for a new generation, we will continue to
5 adjust and rebalance our programs best to serve our entire
6 military community.

7 Led by my office, the military services are currently
8 conducting a review of all assignment and relocation
9 policies, and the effects of those policies on military
10 family stability and quality of life. We want to ensure
11 that we are optimizing the use of existing authorities and
12 resources. This report will inform our report that is due
13 to you in June of this year.

14 Chairman Tillis, Ranking Member Gillibrand, I thank you
15 for having us here today, and I look forward to answering
16 any questions that you may have.

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

18 [SUBCOMMITTEE INSERT]

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Senator Tillis: Ms. Raezer?

1 STATEMENT OF JOYCE W. RAEZER, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR,
2 NATIONAL MILITARY FAMILY ASSOCIATION

3 Ms. Raezer: Mr. Chairman, Ranking Member Gillibrand,
4 thank you so much for the invitation to the National
5 Military Family Association to speak about military family
6 readiness. Our statement for the record highlights many of
7 the issues important to these families. I am going to touch
8 on a few.

9 Nothing is more important, say our military families,
10 to their readiness than access to quality health care. I
11 want to thank members of this subcommittee, the entire
12 Senate Armed Services Committee, and Congress for your
13 dedication last year to creating meaningful reforms in the
14 military health system to enhance medical readiness, provide
15 the best care for our troops in combat, and improve military
16 families' access to care. These reforms are needed.

17 In our recent survey of 9,000 military spouses, 30
18 percent who use a military hospital reported they rarely or
19 never get an acute care appointment within the 24-hour
20 access standard, a finding that is reinforced by the Defense
21 Health Agency's own transparency data. We urge you to hold
22 DOD accountable for meeting both the letter and the spirit
23 of the law you have just passed as they implement these
24 reforms.

25 Please help ensure ongoing work to improve pediatric

1 care and support for special needs families does not get
2 lost in the rush to implement both the legislative reforms
3 and the next round of TRICARE contracts this year.

4 While DOD has made progress in making the Exceptional
5 Family Member Program more consistent across the services,
6 military families still need better coordination between the
7 relocation, education, health care, and family support
8 elements of the program.

9 We also urge you to adopt the recommendations of the
10 Military Compensation and Retirement Modernization
11 Commission and direct DOD to align coverage under the ECHO
12 program, especially respite care, with State Medicaid waiver
13 programs.

14 Military spouses face barriers in obtaining an
15 education, getting a job, and moving up in a career, all
16 while managing the frequent moves, deployments, and other
17 stressors of military life. And we thank you for
18 questioning the senior enlisted advisors on this issue.
19 Military spouses need help funding their education, to
20 include loan forgiveness for professions such as behavioral
21 health. They need relief from transferring multiple
22 professional licenses, employers who value their skills, and
23 better access to child care. Please address the continuing
24 child care shortage by working to ensure that installation
25 child development centers are adequately staffed and to

1 increase availability of part-time and hourly care and more
2 access to the child care fee assistance program.

3 We also ask you to ensure that as the nature of
4 deployments continues to evolve and as the services increase
5 end strength, the programs that support military families
6 and keep them both physically and financially fit, health
7 care and child care access, and the pillars of military
8 compensation all remain strong.

9 Military family and service member readiness are
10 inexorably linked. Military families shudder when they hear
11 their service member may not have the training and equipment
12 they need to do the job. Service members cannot focus on
13 that job if their spouse cannot get a job, their sick child
14 cannot get a doctor's appointment, or if there is no quality
15 child care available.

16 Families faltering with the demands of military life
17 will also be less prepared for transition out of the
18 military. Programs to support these families must be
19 responsive, consistently funded, and constantly evaluated as
20 the needs of our military families evolve with the demands
21 of the mission.

22 Thank you for your support of military families.

23 [The prepared statement of Ms. Raezer follows:]

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1 Senator Tillis: Thank you, Ms. Raezer.

2 Ms. Roth-Douquet, I am glad that you brought up child
3 care again. Obviously, we talked about it in the first
4 panel.

5 In connection with the Baby Bundles program, I ran
6 across a young military couple who all of a sudden found out
7 that they were going to have triplets. And the point about
8 child care could not be more important because you reach a
9 point with a young family, dependent upon the job market,
10 where they have to make an economic decision if they do not
11 have broadly available, affordable health care. Is it
12 taking care of the children, taking a job? What is best for
13 the family? It is a very difficult choice.

14 So I appreciate and would like to make sure that we get
15 -- I am looking forward to the testimony before the full
16 committee to talk a little bit more about that, what we can
17 do. It seems to me that there are a lot of priorities here,
18 but that is a very important one and I look forward to your
19 testimony.

20 You mentioned something that was not discussed in the
21 prior committee, but I think is very important. And that
22 has to do with the effect on families because of the OPTEMPO
23 that we have experienced for quite some time. You know, on
24 the one hand, we could talk about family support programs
25 that deal with the OPTEMPO. I think the root cause of the

1 problem is we have got to change the OPTEMPO because
2 otherwise we are just addressing the symptoms and not the
3 problem. That is something for the full committee and other
4 subcommittees.

5 But can you talk a little bit about just practical
6 examples of where this OPTEMPO has just had bad outcomes in
7 terms of our military families or things that we should be
8 concerned with when you see the pace of deployment and
9 redeployment?

10 Ms. Roth-Douquet: Absolutely. And as Joyce and Ms.
11 Barna mentioned, it is not necessarily just the deployment,
12 it is also the training. And sequestration has caused a lot
13 of problems with that too because it is difficult then to
14 schedule some of the training that is necessary. People end
15 up with larger amounts of separation.

16 So what we do see is families having a plan, having
17 that plan be disrupted. I do not have as my backup the
18 person who runs my annual survey because 2 months ago she
19 found out that her husband was going to be reassigned to
20 Italy. So in their case, having had him just come back from
21 a 9-month deployment, they decided to opt against family
22 separation. She had to move with less than 2 months'
23 notice, take her children out of school mid school year,
24 which the National Child Education Coalition tells us is the
25 most disruptive thing. She is able to keep her job because

1 she works for a military family organization, but normally
2 she would have lost her job at that point. And it is the
3 cumulative effect of the separations they have had in the
4 past that did not allow them to pace this one out that would
5 have been more healthy for their family.

6 We see this over and over again, families being forced
7 to make decisions about the wellbeing and thriving of their
8 family members because repeated deployments or trainings
9 that are unsynced with family lifestyle have caused this
10 kind of distress. And again, in our survey, nearly three-
11 quarters say it is unhealthy, it is unsustainable. So that
12 is a big number. And again, I do not think that Americans
13 have any idea.

14 Senator Tillis: Thank you.

15 Ms. Barna, one of the things we discussed and Ms.
16 Raezer mentioned it in terms of how we can work more closely
17 with the States and other organizations as people make
18 transitions into private sector jobs or re-service for that
19 matter. What work has the Department done to try and
20 harmonize the differences in State jurisdictions and trying
21 to come up with a consistent message and approach that we
22 can send to the States to make sure that we are optimizing
23 those opportunities to put men and women in the armed
24 services first and trying to get these jobs filled with
25 great skills that they can bring to the table?

1 Ms. Barna: Absolutely, Senator Tillis. We would agree
2 that our service members, even if not necessarily in a more
3 traditional credentialed or licensed occupation like a truck
4 driver, an air traffic controller, that they bring to the
5 table what we call essential skills, things like the
6 leadership training and skills that they have developed over
7 the period of their service, their ability to team build,
8 their ability to problem solve. And we have found that
9 these are exactly the skills, no matter the occupation, that
10 employers everywhere continue to crave, and it is why our
11 service members are doing so well in all of the States as
12 they reenter the job market.

13 So we are very pleased with the collaboration that we
14 have received from the individual States, from various
15 associations comprised of States or regions. There are
16 certain organizations in the Northeast, for example, that
17 specialize in energy, in coal, in shale. So they are
18 turning their local needs for expertise into calls for
19 service member employment. Come our way. Listen to what we
20 have to offer. Resettle in our particular locale. So we
21 have received incredible support for our transitioning
22 service members.

23 Senator Tillis: I would like to get some specific
24 examples of that so that we can see in other areas where
25 maybe we can do some work.

1 Ms. Raezer?

2 Ms. Raezer: Just to add on to what Ms. Barna said,
3 there is an office within the Department of Defense called
4 the Defense State Liaison Office. That has made tremendous
5 strides on working with States to address issues like
6 unemployment compensation for mobile military spouses,
7 working the licensure issue. So there are improvements in
8 licensure transferability, thanks to the work of Mrs. Obama
9 and Dr. Biden and also the National Governors Association
10 and the State liaison office. But as Chief Cody pointed out
11 in the last panel, there are still costs involved with that
12 licensure transferability.

13 So I am old military spouse. We have seen progress in
14 this area because a lot of people have been working on it,
15 but there is still a lot more to do to help our spouses and
16 our transitioning service members launch or further careers
17 because of some of these State barriers. But luckily we
18 have something to build on.

19 Senator Tillis: Thank you.

20 Ranking Member Gillibrand?

21 Senator Gillibrand: Thank you.

22 Ms. Roth-Douquet and Ms. Raezer, I am a cosponsor with
23 a Republican Senator of the Military Family Stability Act.
24 It is a bipartisan bill that is designed to lessen the
25 burden on military families completing permanent changes of

1 station. The legislation allows families to move up to 6
2 months ahead of or behind service members to allow spouses
3 and children to smooth this transition between academic and
4 employment settings.

5 Senator Blunt and I introduced this last year. It was
6 included in the NDAA, but then it was largely gutted in
7 conference, which was a shame.

8 But can you describe for Senator Tillis and the record
9 the impact on military children of moving during the school
10 year and how the flexibility to complete the entire semester
11 and move during the summer? Winter breaks would affect
12 military families. And when you speak with military spouses
13 worried about a private sector career or progression of
14 furthering higher education opportunities, how do they
15 describe the difficulty of PCS orders dictating the
16 relocations? And how could the bill lessen the concerns of
17 military spouses when transitioning between duty stations?

18 Ms. Roth-Douquet: Senator Gillibrand, thank you for
19 your support of that bill. We are big fans of this
20 legislation in part because it gives dignity to military
21 families. Military families are increasingly millennials,
22 35 and under, and millennials more than previous generations
23 really value having some control and some say over their
24 lives. This bill does let families choose when it is best
25 for the family to move, and not only when it is convenient

1 for the service from the point of view of the service and
2 national security.

3 We are very happy to do anything necessary for national
4 security, but moves that take place in October or February
5 do not necessarily help national security and they are
6 proven to hurt military children. When you start in the
7 middle of a school year, it hurts socially and it certainly
8 hurts academically, and it can delay for a year or more a
9 child getting back on track. Likewise, a spouse having the
10 inability to control the end of her employment and planning
11 for new employment can have devastating effects on the
12 ability of the family to maintain fiscal health.

13 This bill on your part puts that back in the family's
14 lap and gives them the kind of control that can make the
15 necessary challenges bearable because the unnecessary ones
16 have not been forced on them.

17 Ms. Raezer: I agree. It really is about giving that
18 family some control of their destiny. I have encountered
19 many spouses who did not have enough lead time to work a
20 licensure issue in order to get a job in a new place. But
21 if you know you are heading to a new place, that is a start
22 to take that class or start working the paperwork to get
23 this through or staying behind to close out a semester. We
24 have a military spouse scholarship program. So we have
25 spouses who are trying to finish a degree in one place, and

1 if all you need is one more semester to be able to stay put,
2 that is a tremendous help both financially and in terms of
3 launching a career. So to give that family the control to
4 make these decisions for what is best for the family while
5 also keeping in mind what is best for the military is a
6 great solution for these families.

7 Ms. Roth-Douquet: May I offer an anecdote?

8 Senator Gillibrand: Yes.

9 Ms. Roth-Douquet: When my family was stationed in
10 Germany, my husband was reassigned in June. My children's
11 school year finished at the end of July. So we paid \$15,000
12 out of pocket to allow the children to finish the year. My
13 oldest was a 9th grader. She would not have graduated with
14 grades that would have allowed her to go to college if we
15 had taken her out 2 months before the end of the school
16 year. We were able to absorb that although that was
17 painful, but there are many families who do not have that
18 option.

19 Senator Gillibrand: Ms. Barna, when we did this
20 legislation, the Department of Defense was very worried
21 about cost concerns. And so we updated the legislation in
22 response to their concerns. So the newer language no longer
23 provides for a second basic allowance for housing or
24 separate pack-outs when moving. Do you think these changes
25 alleviate the Department's past concerns regarding the

1 legislation? And what further changes to the Military
2 Family Stability Act will allow the Department to fully
3 support this legislation, which was written in direct
4 response to the concerns voiced by military families?

5 Ms. Barna: Senator Gillibrand, of course, I cannot
6 comment on pending legislation, but I think I can speak to
7 the Department's comments on legislation that was introduced
8 in the past term and speak to some of our concerns about
9 that particular legislation.

10 The area of military assignments and relocation is not
11 an area in which there is a lot of law. And we believe that
12 the absence of law in this arena actually gives the
13 Department, actually gives our commanders, actually gives
14 our families maximum flexibility already.

15 The review that I alluded to in my opening statement is
16 a review that is designed to get at are we applying the
17 authorities that we do have, the resources that we do have,
18 the flexibility that we do have in a way that ensures that
19 the types of situations that both Joyce and Kathy have
20 referenced do not need to occur.

21 So we are concerned about a law that says you may move
22 within 180 days in advance or afterward as being overly
23 constraining because we believe that the policies we have in
24 place today would allow moves to take place much further on
25 either side of that line of demarcation. We are concerned

1 about a law that might limit the bases for some family
2 stability or family moving in advance to only childhood
3 education or the spouse's employment. Today a spouse and a
4 family can come forward for any reason and ask for
5 additional flexibility to move on either side of that
6 service member's report date.

7 So those are just a few of the examples. We believe we
8 have the flexibility, and we hope we are not restricting it
9 by policies and the way that we are implementing them.

10 Senator Gillibrand: I would like the two witnesses to
11 respond to that answer because it sounds entirely farcical
12 to me.

13 Ms. Roth-Douquet: With a lot of respect, I have not
14 seen that happen in real life ever. And in my own life and
15 those -- we have 150,000 members in Blue Star Families, and
16 that is not the experience of people on the ground.

17 Ms. Raezer: I think a lot of times our service members
18 and families do not know what to ask.

19 Senator Gillibrand: Did you ask to change your move
20 date? I want to push back on that response. Did you ask to
21 have accommodation when you had to move?

22 Ms. Roth-Douquet: Well, there was no -- right. We
23 could not. It was not possible to change that date.

24 Senator Gillibrand: I think everyone begs and pleads
25 and gets a no.

1 Ms. Raezer: Well, I think there is a lot who just --
2 we tend to salute and move forward with what is best for the
3 military. And so to provide options for families to make
4 choices that are best for themselves is what our families
5 are seeking. So we believe that this is important.

6 These are still tough family decisions, a family
7 decision to separate, to have a service member go ahead or a
8 service member wait behind and family go ahead, especially
9 if you have been separated a lot for deployment. Those are
10 still difficult situations, but the legislation would enable
11 families to go in and say this is what is best for the
12 family, and we do not have to fight the military to get what
13 is best for our family. And that is the piece that is so
14 important.

15 Senator Gillibrand: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

16 Senator Tillis: Thank you, Senator Gillibrand.

17 Just going back to this topic, Ms. Barna, I appreciate
18 your feedback on the policy or maybe some concerns. Hearing
19 you all talk reminded me of that scene in that movie "Cool
20 Hand Luke," what we have is a failure to communicate. And a
21 part of what we are talking about is that the military
22 families may make a decision not to push it because they are
23 so accustomed to doing what they have been asked to do, that
24 we have to create a culture where it is okay to say that
25 \$15,000 for my 9th grader to be in school for 2 more months

1 is probably something we should not impose on a man or woman
2 in the military. And creating a culture where that is okay
3 -- you will always have abuses where it will become a matter
4 of convenience. That is where the Department has to give us
5 some sense of how we can strike the balance. But I do share
6 Senator Gillibrand's concerns that right now we are not
7 communicating the potentially negative impacts that we are
8 having on families just because of a culture of doing what
9 you have been asked or ordered to do.

10 Ms. Raezer, I wanted to -- first off, I wanted to thank
11 Senator Gillibrand for her work and successfully preserving
12 some of the TRICARE coverages for families with children
13 with autism. I think it is critically important. It is an
14 example of one of those things that a man or woman on the
15 battlefield could be absolutely distracted by putting their
16 life, the lives of their brothers and sisters in danger and
17 not letting them focus on the task at hand on the
18 battlefield. So I am glad that we were able to deal with
19 that. Hopefully, we will not have to deal with that in the
20 future.

21 I did have a question, though, because you mentioned I
22 think briefly the Exceptional Family Member Program. Why do
23 you think a congressional mandate to put together a
24 comprehensive plan -- well, maybe you do not agree. It
25 seems to me it is taking a little long to actually get that

1 done. Do you share that opinion, and can you give me any
2 idea why that is?

3 Ms. Raezer: Yes, sir. We do think it has taken too
4 long, and that is why we are coming to you. We are working
5 with the Department of Defense Health Affairs on the ECHO
6 program and the recommendation raised by the Military
7 Compensation and Retirement Modernization Commission on
8 aligning ECHO with Medicaid State waivers. And it has just
9 taken too long. Huge progress made on the autism therapies,
10 but there are many other services that are covered by some
11 of these waiver programs that our families cannot access.
12 And so we still have special needs families who are not
13 getting the services they need through the Department of
14 Defense or through a State program that are in limbo. And
15 so we need a push to move that through.

16 Senator Tillis: Well, thank you. You know, I think
17 that is a classic example. We have a program in North
18 Carolina where we allowed families with special needs after
19 a year in whatever school that they were assigned to of a
20 parent deciding that they were not getting the treatment
21 that they needed to actually apply for tuition assistance to
22 take them to a specialized school.

23 And I think about your case, Ms. Roth-Douquet. It is
24 very difficult to move a 9th grader. You said it was a
25 daughter. Right? Particularly a 9th grade daughter away

1 from any school, let alone a couple of months before the
2 end. I got one and did that. But when you have a parent or
3 a family with a child with special needs that may be in the
4 middle of an academic year, it is literally a loss of a year
5 or more if they have gotten to a point of care that is
6 helping the child.

7 So it may very well be -- back to the original point
8 about the bill Senator Gillibrand discussed, that we should
9 think first by identifying unique categories that we can
10 look at that really rise to a level to where you can move
11 very quickly into figuring out what sorts of assistance we
12 can provide or accommodation to ultimately allow a
13 successful move. And maybe that is a way that we can start
14 clawing this back and making progress on it. And there I
15 think we can do it in a way that would not be at odds with
16 the Department who would have to oversee administration of
17 it.

18 The other thing, Ms. Barna, I wanted to ask you was as
19 we are working with either men and women who are trying to
20 get education as they are serving, what kind of work has
21 been done to help facilitate the crosswalk of their military
22 experience, mainly dictated by their MOS, and to
23 experiential learning credits for an accredited institution
24 so that you could help accelerate some of their academic
25 progress through getting credit through the institutions?

1 And there are many of them today in increasing numbers.
2 What kind of work are we doing to promote that and make that
3 easier so that someone can apply for experiential learning
4 credits to accelerate their time to a degree?

5 Ms. Barna: Yes, Senator. You have to bookend the
6 process, and I think we are doing some things on both ends.
7 I mean, the first is to ensure that the classes, the
8 coursework that every service member from the most junior
9 grade to the most senior is required to take in the course
10 of both his leadership development and the technical skill
11 in which he or she works to try to find a way to quantify
12 and qualify what those skills are in a way that a civilian
13 institution of learning or credentialing or licensure can
14 understand. And we are actually working right now with RAND
15 to come up with a way to translate those military skills
16 into a listing of civilian skills so that the individual can
17 present this is my coursework, these are the learning
18 objectives that I achieved during that coursework, or this
19 is my experiential learning taken from my job on a day-to-
20 day basis. Will you as the institution grant me credit for
21 those particular experiences? So we have to work first with
22 the service member to ensure that that translator is in
23 place.

24 Then we have to work with the institutions, and we are
25 doing that too through our through our Transition to

1 Veterans Program Office and through the Department of
2 Veterans Affairs trying to work with institutions to help
3 them understand on their side this is exactly what the
4 service member is bringing to you and how they might equate
5 to something that is worthy of credit that you would grant.
6 So it really is a bookended process.

7 Senator Tillis: Thank you.

8 Senator Gillibrand?

9 Senator Gillibrand: In 2013, the Under Secretary of
10 Defense for Personnel and Readiness directed a top level
11 review of the Department of Defense's Family Advocacy
12 Program to prevent and respond to domestic abuse and child
13 abuse and neglect. Recent press reports indicate that the
14 number of incidents of child abuse in the military is
15 increasing.

16 Ms. Barna, what changes were made to the Family
17 Advocacy Program as a result of the top level review of the
18 program? What accounts for the increase in child abuse in
19 military families, and how is the Department responding to
20 the increase? And does the Department need any new
21 legislative authority to address incidents of child and
22 spouse abuse for military families?

23 Ms. Barna: It is, of course, a very challenging
24 question but a very necessary one. So I appreciate you
25 asking it.

1 As the result of the top level review that was really a
2 multi-disciplinary review -- it involved people from FAP.
3 It involved teachers. It involved medical personnel,
4 personnelists across the entirety of what we do in the
5 Department of Defense. We took a good, hard look at how we
6 were both preventing and responding to child abuse and
7 neglect on our installations and in our military families.
8 We came up with 87 sort of on-the-spot, rapidly generated
9 ideas that turned into 37 actual recommendations that we are
10 implementing. The last meeting of what we call our
11 Coordinated Care Response Unit was on January 17th of this
12 year. So we continue to look at how those recommendations
13 are being implemented and whether they are affecting our
14 child abuse and neglect rates.

15 As you mentioned, there has been a disturbing trend
16 that we see. Certainly one can dicker over the numbers, but
17 there has been a disturbing up-tick for our military
18 families in terms of child abuse and neglect. And most of
19 those cases we see fall into the child neglect realm.

20 So we have deliberately targeted the prevention of
21 child neglect, again with our youngest and most vulnerable
22 parents, those who perhaps have not had prior experience,
23 targeting them online and helping them to understand what
24 distracted parenting means, what sleeping arrangements mean,
25 what it means for a father who has been deployed for any

1 number of months away from the family, returns to find a new
2 child, how that father goes about actually bonding with that
3 new child in a way that he may or may not have had an
4 opportunity to do so before.

5 So we have taken some very tactical actions that we
6 hope to improve what is going on, the disturbing trend that
7 we are seeing, and we have taken some overarching
8 programmatic actions through our Coordinated Community
9 Response Initiative.

10 Senator Gillibrand: Do any of those recommendations
11 need legislative authority?

12 Ms. Barna: They do not at this time. But we are
13 slated every 6 months to review how the recommendations are
14 being implemented, to identify any impacts. And so we
15 certainly will come to you should we identify a need for
16 legislative authority.

17 Senator Gillibrand: Please do.

18 And, Ms. Roth-Douquet and Ms. Raezer, what are you
19 hearing from military families about child and spousal
20 abuse, and what is your assessment of the effectiveness of
21 the FAP program and any other efforts to address child and
22 spousal abuse in the military?

23 Ms. Raezer: I think we hear a lot from families who
24 are worn out. And Kathy has talked to some of the
25 information that their survey -- we are getting the same

1 information. These are families who are stressed. We see
2 this in the family programs we run where we bring families
3 to an outdoor retreat to reconnect after a deployment. And
4 it is incredibly uplifting and painful at the same time to
5 see these families try to come together again. So there are
6 stressors for the kids. There are stressors for the
7 parents. There are new relationships to redevelop. And so
8 there is a lot going on.

9 Where our concern lies in the DOD program is on the
10 preventive end of the continuum. Programs like new parents
11 support, health prevention programs, peer support, the whole
12 range of services offered either in person by the
13 installation or via Military OneSource. How do we connect
14 families with resources early on when it is not a problem,
15 and how do we maintain a focus and the provision and the
16 resourcing and the capacity for all of these programs in
17 times of tight budgets, when there is all of the continued
18 deployments and trainings and rotations? So it is a
19 constant attention. When we get the research on the child
20 abuse, we are too late. We have to do the prevention.

21 Ms. Roth-Douquet: Thank you for asking this question.
22 And I agree. The majority is neglect. And I would say it
23 is related to the stress. I think you all can help us not
24 by providing authority to DOD but by helping us connect
25 through our communities. The problem is not something that

1 can necessarily be changed with a law or a regulation. We
2 have families who are moving repeatedly away from family and
3 friends in a society that does not know them. Only 23
4 percent are living on base.

5 Millennials prefer not to identify with a lot of
6 official sources. They often do not want to get their
7 information or their resources from official sources. That
8 means they do not want to get it from DOD. Your Baby
9 Bundles program -- that is what they want to get it from and
10 not just that one time, but they want to actually know
11 people in their community who can help them.

12 Blue Star Families has a program called Blue Star
13 Neighbors where we celebrate the neighbors who make a
14 difference in military family lives. Almost all of the
15 stories people tell us are around a neighbor who helped them
16 during a deployment where they felt they were going to fall
17 apart, and this person stepped in and was part of our
18 family. There are not enough Americans who know how to do
19 that. There are not enough places in each of our
20 communities where military people can get to know non-
21 military people. We often just talk to each other. We
22 cannot give each other the kind of support we need. You all
23 can help us with that, not with the DOD but with the
24 communities.

25 Senator Gillibrand: Since I am out of time, I want to

1 ask one question for the record. I described earlier -- and
2 you were all here -- the fact that in some years more than
3 half the victims of sexual violence are wives and spouses.
4 And then a good number of them, close to half, actually
5 withdraw their complaint in the first year. You have to
6 imagine if you have actually filed a complaint, it means you
7 filled out the paperwork that your husband has beaten you or
8 sexually assaulted you. You have actually disclosed his
9 name publicly. So it took a lot to do that. For them to
10 withdraw from the investigation within a year, a lot would
11 have had to have happened.

12 Can you please make recommendations to me about what
13 you would like to do to fix that problem to, number one,
14 address the issue of the high volume, the fact that they are
15 not counted in the survey, unless they report, they are not
16 part of the estimation, and then what we can do to secure
17 justice? If they withdraw their investigation, unlike a
18 civilian prosecutor, the military drops the case. So
19 whereas a DA might go after a serial rapist no matter what,
20 it is not going to happen in the military if the accuser
21 withdraws. So can you please spend some time thoughtful
22 thinking? Because I would like to begin to address this
23 problem more thoughtfully. And I am not sure what the
24 solution is, but each of you have a perspective that I think
25 would be invaluable. Thank you.

1 Senator Tillis: Well, thank you, Senator Gillibrand.

2 And I want to thank the panelists for being here today.
3 This is the beginning of a dialogue, not just a meeting
4 where we go away, but I hope that you take us up on our
5 offer to get feedback and responses to the questions that we
6 will have for the record, but also reach out to our offices
7 to make sure that we are asking -- you know, you are
8 offering up material that we are not thinking about because
9 I think we are all committed to doing the very best we can
10 for men and women in the military and their families.

11 Anyone who would want to submit any sort of statements
12 for the record or other documents, without objection, we
13 will accept those statements as a part of the committee
14 record.

15 Again, we appreciate you being here, your service to
16 men and women and their families. And I also just want to
17 make sure that I in particular spend a little bit more time
18 understanding what more I can do, as a Senator from North
19 Carolina with one of the larger military presences in the
20 United States, to help get that word out that this is
21 something that we need our need our communities to fully
22 embrace and embrace the men and women that are serving our
23 country and their families. So thank you all for being
24 here.

25 The meeting is adjourned.

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[Whereupon, at 4:11 p.m., the hearing was adjourned.]