



September 30, 2024

The Honorable Jack Reed
Chairman, Armed Services Committee
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Mike Rogers
Chairman, Armed Services Committee
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Roger Wicker
Ranking Member, Armed Services Committee
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Adam Smith
Ranking Member, Armed Services Committee
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Messrs. Chairmen and Ranking Members:

The Military Coalition (TMC), a consortium of uniformed services and veterans' associations representing more than 5.5 million currently serving, retired, former service members, survivors, and their families, thank you and the Committees for your collective work in producing the Fiscal Year 2025 (FY25) National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA). Your efforts support our Uniformed Services, protect the interests of service members, their families and survivors, and enhance our nation's security.

We applaud the bipartisan, bicameral work accomplished by lawmakers and staff this year on important legislation to ensure appropriate pay and benefits. We hope Congress will complete work on both the NDAA and appropriations bills by the end of this fiscal year, so the Department of Defense can continue its work without restrictions on new starts, expired provisions, and other obstacles that occur when these vital bills are put on hold.

We also thank both the House and Senate for reinforcing the fundamental comparability principle with a 4.5 percent pay raise for FY25. Moreover, we respectfully offer the following support and recommendations for the NDAA Conference.

Quality of Life (QOL) Provisions (House Sections 1801-1854) – TMC is grateful for the work of the House QOL Panel and all the recommendations they offered across the spectrum of service life. We urge consideration of these recommendations within Sections 1801-1854 of H.R. 8070. TMC understands the Quadrennial Review of Military Compensation (QRMC) is scheduled to be released next year; however, the risk of report delays and turnover in Congress could delay (by several years) urgently needed relief for immediate problems. Several items that we would like to draw specific attention to are:

- **Junior Enlisted Pay Increase (House Section 1801/Senate Section 601)** – TMC supports the House proposal to increase pay for E1s-E4s by 15 percent (also benefitting E5s) would help relieve the financial strain faced by junior enlisted service members and their families. Moreover, the secondary effect of pay compression for E-5s and E-6s should be remedied in the near future.
- **Increase Basic Allowance for Housing (House Section 1802)** – Adequate and affordable housing is a necessity for service members and their families to accomplish the mission. The creation of cost-sharing, without a matching pay adjustment was a net pay decrease for our troops that must be rectified. TMC supports returning BAH to 100 percent of the rental and utility costs and understands this may need to be addressed incrementally.

- **Basic Needs Allowance for members on active service in the Armed Forces; expansion of eligibility; increase of amount (House Section 1804)** – The Coalition appreciates that in recent years both Congress’ and the Administration’s focus on the pervasive problem of food insecurity among military families. We are especially grateful that Congress authorized the establishment of the Basic Needs Allowance (BNA), a targeted, temporary pay boost for service members whose income and household size place them below 150 percent of federal poverty guidelines. However, to date the number of service members who have received the BNA is extremely limited, which is inconsistent with what the data tells us about the number of families struggling with food insecurity. The TMC supports increasing the BNA threshold to 200 percent of federal poverty guidelines to reach more vulnerable families and ensure they receive much-needed assistance.
- **Standardized Benefits for Child Care Staff Across the Services** – With the increased number of joint bases, it is imperative that programs and policies governing child care are standardized across the services. Ensuring all branches cover 100 percent of child care fees for the first child of staff Child Development Program (CDP) employees will help address staffing shortages and retain child care providers.
- **Fully Funding Child Care Fee Assistance** – The Services’ child care fee assistance programs provide vital financial aid to families who are unable to access care at installation child development centers (CDCs). However, these programs have historically been underfunded, forcing many eligible families to spend months on waiting lists before receiving fee assistance programs. Fully funding the fee assistance program across each of the services will allow more families to find and afford high quality child care.
- **Analysis of Transferability of Benefits Between Child Care Centers** – Allowing employee benefits to transfer between CDCs and ensuring standardization of benefits across the services will support CDP retention efforts.
- **Expand the Military Spouse Career Accelerator Pilot Program and Strengthen Relationships with Chambers of Commerce** – The unprecedented success of the Military Spouse Career Accelerator Pilot (MSCAP) in its initial year is evidence that solving the military spouse unemployment crisis will take a multipronged approach. TMC agrees with the QOL Panel’s recommendation to make this pilot a permanent program.
- **Support Interstate Licensure Compacts** – Much progress has been made to alleviate the obstacles for spouses in licensed fields; however, DoD must continue its vital work with the Council of State Governments to develop additional interstate compacts which provide a more comprehensive solution for spouses transferring a license across state lines.
- **Expansion of Child Care Access to Military Spouses Seeking Employment** – The 2021 Active-Duty Spouse Survey revealed military spouses spend an average of 19 weeks following a military-mandated move to find employment. TMC strongly supports an expansion of CDP access from 90-days to 180-days for unemployed spouses actively seeking work.

Transition Assistance Program (TAP) Provisions (House Sections 561, 564, and 565) – TMC supports these provisions, which improve TAP by enabling it to better meet the needs of Reserve and National Guard service members and their families:

- **House Section. 561. Modifications to Transition Assistance Program** – Waives requirement for pre-separation counseling under TAP if service member has received counseling in the last 3 years.
- **House Section. 564. Establishment of counseling pathway in the TAP for members of certain reserve components of the Armed Forces** – Amends Title 10 Section 1142 to establish one TAP pathway for members of the reserve components.

- **House Sec. 565. Pathway for individualized counseling for members of the reserve components under TAP** – Amends title 10 Section 1142 to provide a pathway for individualized counseling under TAP for reserve component members.

Extension of parental leave to members of the Coast Guard Reserve (House Section 602) – TMC supports this provision, which provides the U.S. Coast Guard Reserve with parental leave equal to that offered to the other branches of the Department of Defense.

Eliminate premiums and co-pays for the TRICARE Dental Program (TDP) for all members of the Selected Reserve. (House Section 702): TMC supports House Sec. 702, which eliminates premiums and co-pays for TDP for all members of the Selected Reserve.

Provisions concerning pregnancy and reproductive care – TMC continues to monitor reported barriers to access health care in locations and specialties across the Military Health System (MHS). While difficulty accessing health care impacts all categories of beneficiaries, it is especially concerning for pregnant mothers, as early and regular access to prenatal care is closely correlated with positive birth outcomes:

- **Pilot program to make pregnancy a Qualifying Life Event (QLE) for TRICARE beneficiaries (House Section 708)** – TMC supports making pregnancy a QLE for TRICARE beneficiaries, which would allow an expectant mother to switch to a new TRICARE plan outside of the annual Open Season and ensure she can access care that meets her needs.
- **Pilot program to prevent perinatal mental health conditions in pregnant and postpartum members of the Armed Forces and covered beneficiaries (House Section 709)** – Mental health issues are the most common complication of pregnancy and childbirth, affecting one out of every five new mothers each year.¹ The prevalence among service women and military spouses may be even higher. A 2022 GAO report revealed that between 2017 and 2019, approximately 36 percent of pregnant or postnatal TRICARE beneficiaries received a mental health diagnosis.² In its report, GAO noted that service members and military spouses experience unique challenges that put them at higher risk for maternal mental health conditions – this provision addresses this.
- **Expanded TRICARE coverage for assisted reproductive technology (House Section 701/Senate Section 705) and TRICARE contraception coverage parity (House Section 711 and Senate Section 731)** – One of the Coalition’s highest priorities is ensuring that TRICARE evolves to meet changing technologies, treatment protocols and commercial plan benchmarks. One gap is coverage of prescription contraceptives. Commercial insurance plans may not charge a copay for contraceptives – not so with TRICARE. **House/Senate Sections 711/731** address this.

Similarly, an increasing number of commercial insurance plans are offering broader coverage for assisted reproductive technology (ART) than is available under TRICARE. TMC supports **House Section 701 and Senate Section 705**, which would make this technology available to active duty service members and their families. However, we strongly encourage Congress to revisit this issue in the future and make this benefit available to all TRICARE beneficiaries. The TRICARE benefit should be consistent and uniform across all beneficiary categories.

Major Richard Star Act (H.R. 1282/S. 344) – We are extremely disappointed that provisions of this important legislation were not included in either the House or Senate versions of FY25 NDAA, despite overwhelming support. More than 75 percent of the 118th Congress supports H.R.1282/S.344 and this bipartisan legislation deserves debate and a floor vote.

¹ Source: [The Maternal Mental Health Leadership Alliance](#)

² United States Government Accountability Office, “Defense Health Care: Prevalence of and Efforts to Screen and Treat Mental Health Conditions in Prenatal and Postpartum TRICARE Beneficiaries,” May, 2022

Expanding America's National Cemetery Act (H.R.1413) – TMC is disappointed the 118th Congress did not include this important legislation into the NDAA this year, while the Armed Services Committees await a report from DoD that was expected last year. Long wait times and military honors without caisson indicate a real reduction in benefits, while ceremonial units still conduct large events where the number of ceremonial troops involved far exceed the small audiences. Designating the location for the next ANC – and using existing ceremonial troops to execute split operations – can reduce wait times and restore the benefit.

Retain Skilled Veterans (House Section 1106) – TMC supports the House's inclusion of language similar to The Retain Skilled Veterans Act (H.R. 939). This would improve competitive hiring pools for DoD civilian positions, by authorizing newly retired service members to apply for critical DoD civilian positions and removing the six-month cooling off period.

Sincerely,



President,
The Military Coalition
cc: Members of House and Senate Armed Services Committees

The Military Coalition:

Air Force Sergeants Association (AFSA)
AMVETS
Blinded Veterans Association (BVA)
Blue Star Families
Commissioned Officers Association of the US Public Health Service (COA)
Chief Warrant Officers Association of the US Coast Guard (CWOA)
Fleet Reserve Association (FRA)
Gold Star Wives of America
Jewish War Veterans of the USA (JWV)
Marine Corps League (MCL)
Marine Corps Reserve Association (MCRA)
Military Chaplains Association (MCA)
Military Officers Association of America (MOAA)
Military Order of the World Wars
National Defense Committee
National Military Family Association (NMFA)
Naval Enlisted Reserve Association (NERA)
Reserve Organization of America (ROA)
Service Women's Action Network (SWAN)
The Independence Fund

The Retired Enlisted Association (TREA)

Tragedy Assistance Program for Survivors (TAPS)

United States Army Warrant Officers Association (USAWOA)

U.S. Coast Guard Chief Petty Officers Association & Enlisted Association

Vietnam Veterans of America (VVA)

Wounded Warrior Project (WWP)