

**Opening Remarks of
Ranking Member Andy Kim
Military Personnel Subcommittee Hearing
*Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion:
Impacts to the Department of Defense
and the Armed Services***

March 23, 2023

We are all here today because we want to take a look at how diversity, equity, and inclusion – or DEI – are affecting our national defense, our service members, and our recruitment and retention.

I had the chance to review your testimonies before today and I noticed two common themes among them.

First, all of you defined “diversity” by saying that it meant more than demographics alone. You said it encompassed knowledge, culture, values, and more. I agree.

Second, you also noted the value of bringing people with diverse backgrounds together to solve problems and matters of national security. I agree with this too.

As the Services face an increasingly challenging recruiting environment, we should be taking steps to widen the pool that we can draw from for our all-volunteer force. That’s common sense. I’m not suggesting we compromise the quality of recruits we bring into the service, just that we don’t arbitrarily limit who can join the ranks. That’s what this effort is in service of — ensuring that we can continue to build our military with the size and capabilities needed.

We ask a lot of our servicemembers. We ask them to risk their lives to protect our country. Making sure they know we have their backs, that we are supporting them, and making them feel included shouldn’t be too much to ask.

I believe, and I’m sure that everyone in this room would agree with me, we owe it to our service members to give them the best possible chance to succeed in every mission, in every task, and with every order they are given. That starts with how we treat every single service member in every branch.

And as our military has grown more diverse and inclusive, our nation’s lethality remains as strong as ever. It’s a false choice to say we have to choose between embracing and strengthening diversity and building an effective and formidable military. As our witnesses have stated, diversity is instead essential to our effectiveness. It does not distract, it focuses. It does not hurt recruitment, it grows it. It does not reduce lethality, it supports it.

I’m proud of our military and believe we have the strongest fighting force in the world. I hope that is something all of us on this committee can agree with. This doesn’t have to be controversial. It was the Trump Administration that created the DoD Board of Diversity and

Inclusion. The Armed Services Committee voted overwhelmingly in a bipartisan way to support the NDAA that established many of the DEI initiatives we are reviewing today. So instead of looking for ways to polarize our military we can instead focus on ways to support its growth and success.

Mr. Chairman thank you for having this hearing today so we can discuss the important benefits that diversity, equity, and inclusion efforts provide DoD and the services.

Thank you to the witnesses again for being here and I yield the balance of my time.