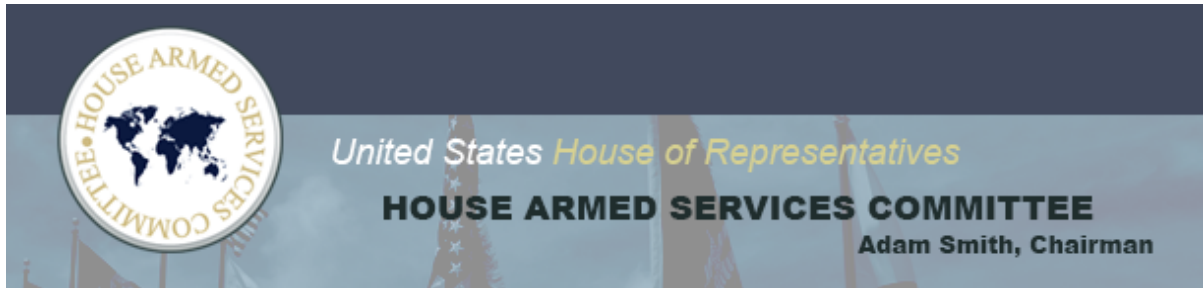


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Opening Statement (As Prepared)
Chair Jackie Speier
Subcommittee on Military Personnel:
*"Markup of H.R. 7900 - National Defense Authorization
Act for Fiscal Year 2023"*
June 8, 2022

Click [here](#) to view the hearing.

As has been our tradition since I've been Subcommittee Chair, this Military Personnel mark was developed in a bipartisan manner and includes member priorities focused on taking care of service members and their families. This mark continues to build on our previous efforts to enhance the benefits our service members rightfully deserve. We have had a series of subject-specific hearings that have informed many of the provisions we have included in the mark.

The bill supports a military basic pay raise of 4.6% and requires the Secretary of Defense to do a thorough assessment on military pay and compensation programs. As such, there is a provision to report on the accuracy of the housing allowance and exclude the housing allowance from household income for the purposes of the Basic Needs Allowance.

The scourge of suicide continues to plague the Services. Based on our meetings with service members and families, we are taking action by increasing the number of behavioral health providers available. By addressing military and civilian behavioral health provider educational pipelines, we will make a short- and long- term impact on improving access to care for those who need it most.

In addition, the mark includes provisions to provide additional financial support to servicemembers stationed in Alaska, including Arctic Pay and broadband and travel allowances, to address the financial pressures and isolation that are contributing factors to death by suicide.

The mark builds on last year's improvements to the Exceptional Family Member Program by establishing a grant program to better support families needing to navigate a new

school district after every move and ensure that their children with disabilities receive appropriate educational services for their needs.

In 2021, more than 20,000 military children with immediate need for child care were stuck on waitlists. Throughout the year, we have visited child development centers across various installations and believe the Department is not doing enough to recruit and retain an adequate workforce to support the child care needs of military families. As a result, we are requiring the Department of Defense to complete a study on adequate pay for military child care center employees.

Last year we made historic reforms to the Uniform Code of Military Justice, and this year we continue that work by asking GAO to ensure that our criminal litigators are getting the best training, resources, and experience possible.

The subcommittee's oversight of the Military Health System is reinforced through various provisions in our subcommittee mark. We remain concerned by the increasing number of vacancies for funded military and civilian health care providers across the Military Health System, so we are prohibiting the Department from realigning or reducing military medical end strength until additional analysis on the impacts is complete. We are also requesting an independent analysis of the Quality and Patient Safety Program and a GAO Study on how TRICARE behavioral health coverage compares to mental health parity laws.

Our service members and their families make considerable sacrifices for our Nation; we must continue our commitment to them and their families.

Lastly, I want to acknowledge the committee staff's efforts -- Ilka Regino, Dave Giachetti, Hannah Kaufman, Glen Diehl, Forrest McConnell, and Sidney Faix. They have worked diligently and always in a bi-partisan manner to develop the subcommittee mark.

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