

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

April 21, 2026

The Honorable Pat Fallon
Chairman
Subcommittee on Military Personnel
House Armed Service Committee
2416 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Fallon,

This year marks the 10th anniversary of the enactment of comprehensive reforms to the Military Health System (MHS), which were included in the Fiscal Year (FY) 2017 National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA). These reforms transferred responsibilities for the management of military medical treatment facilities (MTFs) and staffing from the Military Departments to the Defense Health Agency (DHA), with the goal of improving the quality, safety, and efficiency of health care delivery while also strengthening the readiness of military medical providers to perform battlefield medicine.

Despite many successes, the consolidation of authority in the DHA has been marked by infighting and dysfunction among the Military Departments and the Office of the Secretary of Defense. In addition, there have been several missteps by the DHA. Unfortunately, the Military Personnel Subcommittee has not held an oversight hearing related to MHS Transformation in years. We call on you to reschedule the Military Health System hearing both to take stock of the implementation of the reforms and to address concerns that have arisen since DHA assumed control of all MTFs in October 2022.

Over the past ten years, the DHA attempted to close or reduce services at MTFs and failed to hire the requisite civilian and contractor employees to sustain services. While this committee has blocked many of these changes through limitations included in various NDAAAs, the leadership of the Military Health System has not been publicly held accountable for their failure to ensure the operational readiness of our military medical providers or ensuring access to care standards are met both at MTFs and by the managed care support contractors.

The Military Health System is understaffed and unable to deliver timely care. While the broader U.S. health care system also faces staffing challenges, the Department of Defense (DoD) is experiencing acute issues related to MHS Transformation. In 2023, DoD established new processes to assign military medical personnel to MTFs, and Congress has provided DHA with additional funding to address shortfalls and expanded authorities to hire, retain, and compensate

civilian employees, yet the DoD Inspector General has issued multiple reports raising concerns about understaffing of military MTFs and failure to meet access-to-care standards.¹

Our service members deserve better. The president's budget submission for Fiscal Year 2027 fails to keep pace with inflation and the military health care system that has not been accountable to Congress. Now is the time for congressional oversight. We were scheduled to have a hearing just a few weeks ago with MHS Leadership. It was canceled 24 hours before it was scheduled to begin. That is unacceptable.

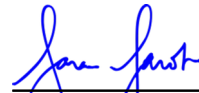
As the Democratic members of the Military Personnel Subcommittee, we request that you reschedule a hearing as soon as possible that will include the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Health Affairs and the Director of the Defense Health Agency. We believe such a hearing would be of strong interest to military personnel and their families who experience challenges in seeking care for their medical needs and could inform the committee and its members as we consider the FY27 NDAA and the President's FY27 budget request.

Thank you for considering our request, and we look forward to working with you on this and other important issues facing our military and civilian personnel.

Sincerely,



Chrissy Houlahan
Ranking Member, Military
Personnel Subcommittee
House Armed Services
Committee



Sara Jacobs
Member of Congress



JM Tokuda
Member of Congress

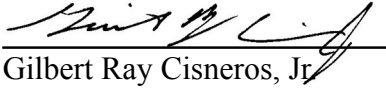


Marilyn Strickland
Member of Congress

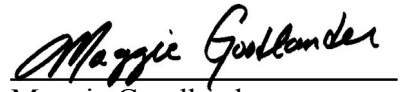
¹ Department of Defense Inspector General (DoD IG), "Management Advisory: Concerns with Access to Care and Staffing Shortages in the Military Health System," November 29, 2023, <https://www.dodig.mil/In-the-Spotlight/Article/3602662/press-release-management-advisory-concerns-with-access-to-care-and-staffing-sho/>; and DoD IG, "Audit of the Defense Health Agency's Management of Military Treatment Facilities Outside the Continental United States," December 8, 2025, <https://www.dodig.mil/Reports/Audits-and-Evaluations/Article/4356064/audit-of-the-defense-health-agencys-management-of-military-medical-treatment-fa/>.

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Gilbert Ray Cisneros, Jr.
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Maggie Goodlander
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