

To: Defense Appropriations Subcommittee

Date: Monday, March 16th, 2026

From: The Honorable Sylvia R. Garcia (TX-29)

Re: Member Testimony for Defense Appropriations Subcommittee Member Day Fiscal Year 2027

Thank you, Mr. Chair, Ranking Member, and Committee Members for the opportunity to provide written testimony for the Defense Appropriations Subcommittee Member Day.

This is an opportunity for Members of the House of Representatives to highlight funding priorities critical to the mission of the U.S. Armed Services, advocate for programmatic requests to safeguard our communities at home and help shape the appropriations process for Fiscal Year 2027.

As such, I would like to highlight some priorities important to the Texas 29th Congressional District, bolster our national security, and support our brave men and women in uniform.

First and foremost, the Committee must continue funding initiatives that prevent and reduce the prevalence of sexual misconduct in the U.S. Armed Forces. As the DOD advances its efforts to address sexual assault in the military - such as the implementation of the recommendations made by the Independent Review Commission (IRC) on Sexual Assault in the military - your steadfast support for programs that fund prevention and response measures is more crucial than ever.

That is why I strongly advocate for securing the highest possible funding levels in the FY27 defense appropriations bill to support U.S. military justice reforms aimed at preventing sexual harassment and assault throughout all branches of the U.S. Armed Forces. These critical funds

will continue building a dedicated, sexual assault prevention-focused workforce in each military service. Specifically, the funds will bolster the Office of the Special Trial Counsel of each U.S. military branch, which is responsible for prosecuting sexual assault and other violent crimes independently from the U.S. military chain of command. At the same time, these funds will support the Special Victims' Counsel (SVCs), who provide confidential legal representation and guidance to survivors navigating the military justice system.

Secondly, I urge the Committee to provide robust funding for the U.S. shipbuilding industrial base. The U.S. faces serious competition from adversaries, and the shipyards' industrial base cannot currently meet the production demands for neither commercial nor military purposes. Our shipbuilding industry continues to deal with workforce shortages, decaying shipyards and infrastructure, and supply chain delays that have ultimately hindered the modernization of our military ships. These issues may place the U.S. at risk of falling further behind our adversaries in shipbuilding capacity, ultimately impacting the U.S. Navy's ability to maintain a ready, capable fleet, as well as hindering our military readiness during times of conflict.

The Committee must invest in the U.S. shipbuilding industrial base to continue strengthening the shipbuilding capability and ensure that our Navy service members can confront any threats. These funds will help modernize military shipyards, expand training programs to grow skilled shipbuilders, improve worker retention, and bolster the current supply chain and logistics to continue supporting ship construction and maintenance. All investments will only help accelerate the long-needed ship modernization, improve military readiness, and ensure that the U.S. Navy prevails during any conflict against any adversary.

I also request the Committee to continue supporting and investing in the Defense Health Programs. This program supports crucial military healthcare and medical research, and advocates for the well-being of our service members, veterans, and military families. Our service members face countless health hazards as they serve with honor and bravery, such as combat injuries, mental illnesses, or long-term conditions. As more service members and veterans depend on medical care to treat their service-related conditions, it is vital to continue providing robust funding to ensure the delivery of adequate healthcare and continue investing in medical technology that can improve health outcomes.

Similarly, I also request the highest possible funding for the Congressionally Directed Medical Research Programs (CDMRP). A portion of the Defense Health Program funding goes to CDMRP, which partners with different universities, hospitals, nonprofits, and companies to fund external peer-reviewed research on a wide range of conditions impacting our service members, veterans, and the public. Some of the research focuses on breast cancer and other cancers, traumatic brain injury and mental health, rare diseases, orthopedic injuries, and prosthetics. This program is crucial to continue supporting innovative research that improves the quality of life for our service members and veterans. At the same time, all research can also benefit other patients and the medical community across the U.S.

Just as important, I would like to highlight the need to improve the quality of life of our service members and their dependents. Those who volunteer to serve our nation often endure frequent deployments, demanding working schedules, family separation, and the physical and mental demands associated with military service. Similarly, these challenges also take a toll on spouses

and children, who are forced to deal with constant moves and long periods of separation from their loved ones.

Frequent relocations and unpredictable deployments force service members and their families to seek childcare services provided by the Department of Defense, the largest employer-sponsored childcare program in the U.S. However, military families must deal with limited access to these services and face excessive waiting times that can reach more than six months. In addition, several childcare centers currently face personnel shortages and high vacancies for childcare staff. Military families are forced to take the services of childcare centers outside of the Department of Defense, resulting in additional expenses. It is essential to provide funding for the Child Development Centers and ensure that our service members can access high-quality childcare. These centers provide childcare services in military installations for service members' children and work to support their natural development.

Additionally, programs that support military spouse employment play a significant role in providing the financial stability that these families need. This is why I request robust funding for the Spouse Education and Career Opportunities program and the Military Spouse Education Partnership. These programs connect military spouses with career resources, coaching, and military-friendly employers. Funding for these programs will expand and improve employment opportunities for military spouses, bolster military readiness, and sustain military families financially.

Finally, I request the Committee to support robust funding for the Defense Community Infrastructure Program (DCIP). The DCIP was established to help address deficiencies in infrastructure near military installations. This program was created by Congress to address aging water and power systems near bases, a lack of schools or childcare centers available to service members' children, and aging infrastructure in military bases. All of this directly degrades military readiness and can impact retention rates. Supporting the DCIP would fund projects that improve military readiness and provide service members with a better quality of life as they continue to serve.

I look forward to working with all the Members of the Subcommittee in advancing these priorities that are not only important to the Texas 29th Congressional District, but communities across our nation.