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STATEMENT OF  
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BEFORE THE  
SUBCOMMITTEE ON MILITARY CONSTRUCTION, VETERANS AFFAIRS AND  
RELATED AGENCIES  
OF THE  
HOUSE APPROPRIATIONS COMMITTEE  
ON  
QUALITY OF LIFE

8 MARCH 2017

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Chairman Dent, Ranking Member Wasserman Schultz and distinguished Members of the Subcommittee, I am grateful to be able to update you on the Marine Corps' enduring commitment to the physical, mental and spiritual well-being of our Marines and their families.

The Marine Corps continues to maintain its operational readiness and commitment to the Nation, remaining forward-deployed and ready to respond to crises around the world. As we have been for the last 15 years, the Marine Corps is forward-deployed and in high demand by combatant commanders across the Globe. In 2016, your Marines executed approximately 185 operations, 20 amphibious operations, 140 theater security cooperation events, and 65 major exercises.

With the dynamic pace of current and future demands, our Nation requires, and the American people expect, your Marines to answer the call to fight, and to win. Thanks to your support and leadership, the Marine Corps is the Nation's expeditionary force in readiness. The Marine Corps is the most ready force, when the Nation is least ready.

### **OUR MARINES**

Your Marines are the foundation of the Marine Corps. They are the Corps' most sacred resource, and always will be. Your Marines are recruited, educated, trained, equipped, and retained to win our Nation's battles. They are smart, resilient, fit, disciplined, and able to overcome adversity. Recruiting high quality youth and retaining those who's past service and future potential makes the Corps stronger is our highest priority. Everything we do in the Marine Corps must contribute to their readiness and combat effectiveness.

The Marine Corps is by far your most junior service. The average age of your Active Component Marines is 25 years; 65 percent are under 25 years of age or younger and 56 percent of your Marines are single. As a result of these dynamics, programs to support Marines and

families are important. The adage “we recruit Marines, we retain families” remains as true today as ever. Our comprehensive package of programs and services seek the holistic fitness and readiness of our Marines and families – body, mind, spirit, and social.

## **QUALITY OF LIFE PROGRAMS**

### **FAMILY READINESS**

Our portfolio of Family Readiness programs provides Marines and families with the tools and resources needed to successfully meet the challenges of military life and enhance mission readiness by providing preventative education (i.e., Stress Management, Anger Management, etc.) that is offered at finite and predictable touch points across the life-cycle of a Marine and their family. The focus is to increase awareness and to provide skill building tools and readiness for individual and family development. Our family readiness programs continue to methodically adjust to a post-Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF) footing, while also taking into account the unpredictable and demanding operational tempo before, during, and after deployments.

### **PHYSICAL FITNESS**

Our Semper Fit and Recreation programs continue to improve and sustain military readiness and the health, fitness, and quality of life for our Marines, Sailors, and their families. These programs are continually under review to better identify capabilities/requirements and prioritize resources. The goal is to provide the Total Force a healthy environment through relevant programs and services which sustain readiness, enhance quality of life, and promote community wellness.

The Marine Corps provides tobacco cessation programming through the Semper Fit Health Promotion (SFHP) Program through Health Promotion Coordinators (HPCs). There are 18 Marine Corps installations with a SFHP Program which provide tobacco cessation classes in group and one-on-one formats. The classes are regularly scheduled and also provided upon

request. Prevention activities include awareness briefs, educational classes, media awareness campaigns, seminars, “How To” workshops, health screenings, health fairs, challenges/incentive programs, and promotion of various national health observances. In January 2017, the Marine Corps launched Operation Tobacco Free Marine (OTFM) which is a Tobacco Cessation Program (TCP) utilizing an accredited, evidence-based package developed specifically for the Marine Corps by Florida State University to help tobacco users quit successfully.

The Semper Fit and Recreation facilities and programs receive more than 14 million patron visits annually, providing 115 total programs, and utilize 610 facilities and recreational areas across the Marine Corps. In Fiscal Year (FY) 2016, Marine Corps fitness centers hours were expanded to ensure that Marines, attached Sailors, and dependents have access to fitness centers when it is convenient for them.

In support of the CMC’s guidance, the Marine Corps is implementing a unit-level fitness subject matter expert responsible for the physical readiness within individual units. A pilot of the Force Fitness Instructor (FFI) model was conducted in the fall of 2016, graduating 42 instructors. A minimum of six FFI courses will be conducted per year with an annual throughput of 300 FFIs. Total force full operational capability is defined as one FFI per unit is expected by end of calendar year 2018. Semper Fit and Recreation will fully support FFIs through access to fitness centers, High Intensity Tactical Training (HITT) centers/lockers, pools, outdoor recreational equipment, and our fitness subject matter experts.

Endorsed by the National Strength and Conditioning Association’s (NSCA) - Tactical Strength and Conditioning (TSAC) Department, the Marine Corps HITT program is a comprehensive combat-specific strength and conditioning program that is essential to a Marine’s physical development, combat readiness, and resiliency. The HITT program takes into

consideration the physical demands of operational related activities in order to optimize physical performance while in combat. The program emphasizes superior speed, power, strength, and endurance, improving overall combat readiness, and reducing injuries. Education is delivered face to face via “Train the Trainer” courses at each installation (conducted by certified strength and conditioning specialists), Enlisted Professional Military Education courses, and virtually via the HITT website and mobile app.

### **BEHAVIORAL HEALTH/SUICIDE**

The Marine Corps Behavioral Health capability helps provide continuous access to quality behavioral healthcare, prevention services, and other support services in and out of times of crisis. Our approach is an integrated and comprehensive approach.

To address suicidal behaviors, we continue to expand the Marine Intercept Program (MIP) that was initiated in FY 2014. The MIP is an outreach program offering ongoing support to Marines and attached Sailors with suicide ideation or attempt. Outreach occurs when Marines are at highest risk for further suicide related behavior. MIP provides connection to other services, evidence-based suicide risk assessment, and safety planning a series of care contacts over the course of 90 days. MIP provides follow-up contact and service coordination for Marines and attached Sailors with suicidal ideations and attempts via 16 installation-based Community Counseling Programs (CCP). Since the November 2013 launch, over 3,100 suicide ideation or attempt cases were identified and reported through MIP. In calendar year 2016, 83.4 percent of Marines who were reached accepted MIP services.

### **SEXUAL ASSAULT**

The Marine Corps has remained actively engaged and visible in the fight against sexual assault by modeling positive leadership engagement and disseminating messages that emphasize expectations for how all Marines should behave. In May 2016, the Marine Corps hosted two Non-Commissioned Officer (NCO) Summits with more than 120 NCOs from across the Corps with the goal to enhance first-line supervisor skills and knowledge regarding Sexual Assault Prevention and Response (SAPR). Also in 2016, the Marine Corps, along with the Department of Defense (DoD), began tackling the issue that male Marines are less likely to come forward to report a sexual assault than female Marines. Efforts have focused on the development of gender-specific initiatives and strategic outreach plans. To support these efforts the Marine Corps hosted a panel of professional experts to provide insight into the continuum of care for male victims, including short and long-term effects of sexual assault on men, advocacy support for male victims, and building Marine Corps-wide awareness.

### **CHILDCARE**

The Marine Corps strives to provide the best child care services for our Marines, attached Sailors and families. In FY 2016, the Marine Corps extended childcare development center hours to a 14-hour minimum, ensuring military families are able to have access to care for their children when they are on duty. The Marine Corps, like other Services, has been looking at our long-range options of our current childcare programs and how to improve access. This includes partnership with MilitaryChildCare.com that provides a single gateway for military families to find comprehensive information on military-operated or military-approved childcare programs worldwide. This system will make it easier on families to navigate the process and to facilitate more expedited access to childcare.

### **EFMP**

The primary mission of our Exceptional Family Member Program (EFMP) is to improve the quality of life for families that support a member with special needs while maintaining the readiness of our deployable forces. The EFMP screening process ensures that Marines with a special needs family member will have the special medical and/or educational needs considered during the assignment process. We maximize family support funds to provide critical EFMP care services that include (1) Effective assignment of Marines and Exceptional Family Member (EFM) continuum of care; (2) Individualized family case management support; (3) Care navigation training for EFM Advocates (parents/sponsor); and (4) Access to legal services. EFMP is continuing to work to increase the inclusion of individuals with special needs, ensuring that individuals of all abilities are able to participate in the variety of programming offered through Marine Corps Community Services. In partnership with Semper Fit, staff has received training to support recreation inclusion. EFMP is in direct support of Child and Youth Programs (CYP) efforts to increase the participation of children with special needs in CYP, through the Kids Included Together (KIT) initiative and the Inclusion Action Team.

### **MARINE CORPS EXCHANGE**

The Marine Corps Exchange (MCX) is embedded in our integrated Marine Corps Community Services model that includes Morale, Welfare, and Recreation (MWR) Child Development, and Warfighter and Family Services programs. This is a very efficient organizational model and includes integrated back-office support in the areas of finance and accounting, human resource management, procurement, construction and information technology. The MCX is a valued benefit, but also provides critical non-appropriated fund dividend support for MWR programs. This is important in the wake of appropriated fund fiscal constraints. Our MCX is proud to employ military family members; they represent

approximately 30 percent of our workforce. Our Business and Support Services team continues to be aggressive in pursuing evolutionary transformation and innovation initiatives that will dramatically improve our services to Marines and their families.

## **TRANSITION**

“Marine For Life” (M4L) is part of our ethos as a Marine. When we say “Once a Marine, Always a Marine” we mean that we are Marines forever – from “Footprint to Funeral Honors.” Our Marine for Life Cycle (M4LC) is a comprehensive strategy to utilize multiple touch points, programs, and resources to instill resilience and success for all Marines and their families. This approach allows Marines to gain awareness of career readiness preparations throughout their career and be proactive in aligning military career goals with post-transition goals. We provide hands-on assistance with career coaching, financial management, assessments, education, job searches, and additional resources to support military career development and facilitate successful post-separation goals.

Our Transition Readiness Program (TRP) provides a comprehensive transition and employment assistance program for Marines and their families. The program emphasizes a proactive approach that will enable them to formulate effective post-transition entrepreneurship, employment, and educational goals. The TRP ensures that Marines are prepared for their transition from military to civilian life and provides them with the tools and resources needed to pursue DoD directed Career Readiness Standards (CRS).

The Personal Readiness Seminar (PRS) is the first action point in our M4LC and is a four-hour seminar designed for Marines to attend upon arrival at their first permanent duty station. The curriculum provides an overview of personal and professional development services throughout their M4LC (Library Services, Family Member Employment, Voluntary Education,



Vocational Credentialing, Personal Financial Management, Transition Readiness, and Information and Referral), as well as financial topics such as banking and financial services, savings and investments, living expenses, understanding debt, and Servicemembers' rights.

The Transition Readiness Seminar (TRS) is the final action point, and a week-long workshop, where Marines receive a wide range of valuable information and services to help facilitate the transition process to civilian life. The first step is mandatory pre-separation counseling where they are educated on benefits and entitlements earned as a result of their time in service, the opportunity to develop a transition plan, and resources to assist in transitioning to civilian life. All Marines are also provided with a point of contact and location for their Department of Labor (DoL) and Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) representative. The workshop includes Resilient Transitions, Military Occupation Specialty Crosswalk, DoL Employment Workshop, VA Benefits I and II Briefs, and Financial Planning. There are three additional tracks that provide hands-on/in-depth application available to the Marines throughout the M4LC: Accessing Higher Education; Career and Technical Training; and Entrepreneurship.

Capstone is the culmination of the transition process and occurs no later than 90 days from separation or retirement. The Commanding Officer, or designee, personally interviews each separating Marine to determine if the Marine has met CRS, has a viable plan to transition from military to civilian life, and the opportunity to be connected with external agencies that offer additional assistance. Any Marine who does not meet the CRS or does not have a viable transition plan is provided a warm handover to DoL or VA partner agencies for post-transition assistance.

**WWR**

The mission of the Wounded Warrior Regiment (WWR) is an enduring commitment to care for wounded, ill and injured Marines in times of war and peace using a unique model that allows Marines with complex care needs to be assigned to the regiment during recovery. Marines and families receive a full spectrum of support through the phases of recovery, rehabilitation and reintegration, to include limited post-transition assistance as needed to ensure our medically separated Marines are properly conveyed to the service and support of the Department of Veterans Affairs. WWR provides services to combat and non-combat injured and ill, and is poised to continue supporting its current population and potentially expanding should combat operations commence in the future.

### **INSTALLATIONS**

Marine Corps bases and stations support Marines and their families and serve as training, sustainment, and deployment platforms. They provide the capability and capacity we need to support the force. They are integral to combat readiness, but also essential in the quality of life through the delivery of an array of services and utilization of critical support facilities and related infrastructure. We require adequate infrastructure to support training, housing, quality of life, operations, communications, logistics, and maintenance facilities vital to the Marine Corps mission.

We take care of our own - including our families - and it begins with our Installations. The entire military community thrives when our bases and stations deliver exemplary installations support; increasing unit and family readiness. Thus, improving the current state of our facilities is the single most important investment to support training, operations, and quality of life.

### **FISCAL CLIMATE**

In order to maintain the Marine Corps' near-term unit readiness, we have accepted risk in long-term warfighting modernization and facilities sustainment. While prioritizing deployed readiness, our infrastructure and facilities condition continue to decline and the continued constrained levels of funding for Facility Sustainment, Restoration and Modernization requirements is causing progressive degradation of our infrastructure and creates increased long-term costs. Facilities restoration and modernization is currently funded only to meet the most urgent life, safety, and health issues.

Current funding levels put us at risk of reversing hard-earned gains in our infrastructure status as our new construction ages prematurely for lack of maintenance. Left unchecked, our inability to fully maintain our facilities will impact not only quality of life, but also on our support to training, operations, logistics, and ultimately readiness. We have a backlog of \$9B in deferred infrastructure sustainment requirements.

## **CONCLUSION**

In closing, we are a proud Corps. We take care of our own and their families. The Marines of our Corps represent the American people who have stepped forward and sworn to defend and protect our Nation. By ensuring that we take care of all Marines and their families, we fulfill our responsibility to keep faith with the honor, courage, and commitment they have so freely given.

I appreciate the Congress' support to Marines around the world and look forward to working with you to ensure the Marine Corps remains the Nation's force in readiness.