

CONGRESSMAN JOE NEGUSE
HOUSE ARMED SERVICES COMMITTEE
MEMBERS DAY TESTIMONY
April 11, 2024

Chairman Rogers, Ranking Member Smith, and distinguished members of the House Armed Services Committee, thank you for the opportunity to submit written testimony on the upcoming Fiscal Year (FY) 2025 National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA). As you work to finalize the House version of the FY25 NDAA, I request that you include the following provisions, each of which support our national security, and would support our veterans and federal wildland firefighters, improving housing and health standards for our service members, and increase funds for national security research and development.

The Colorado Outdoor Recreation and Economy (CORE) Act (H.R.3437), a bill which passed the House five times, including most recently in the FY23 NDAA, would preserve approximately 420,000 acres of public land in Colorado and honors the 10th Mountain Division and the legacy of local WWII veteran Sandy Treat. The public lands protected in the CORE Act are important to all Americans, including sportsmen and ranchers, and help to sustain Colorado's \$28 billion outdoor recreation economy. After years of collaboration, careful consultation, and negotiation, the CORE Act enjoys the full support of seven counties, 12 cities and towns, the State of Colorado, and countless outdoor businesses, sportsmen, conservation, and recreation organizations. Given the broad support for this bill and its inclusion in the FY21, FY22, and FY23 House-passed NDAA's, I urge you to include the CORE Act in the final FY25 NDAA.

I would also like to mention two provisions to support our federal wildland firefighters, both of which have passed the House in previous NDAA's. **The Housing Our Firefighters Act** would establish a housing stipend for federal wildland firefighters, hired at a location more than 50 miles from their primary residence, and **the Care for Our Firefighters Act** would secure mental health programs for federal wildland firefighters, including a mental health awareness campaign, peer-to-peer support network, expansion of the Critical Incident Stress Management Program, mental health leave, and making sure that trauma-informed mental health professionals are available to provide their services. In addition to those two priorities, I request that you include the text of **H.R.5153** in the final version of the upcoming FY25 NDAA. This bill would direct the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to administer a pilot program to employ veterans in positions that relate to federal wildland firefighting activities. This increase in public demand and expectations placed on wildland firefighters is only expected to exponentially increase in the coming years. Maintaining this workforce is of the utmost importance to our national security.

Our veterans, servicemembers, and first responders put their lives on the line to serve our country. It's incumbent that we provide access to programs that ensure their ability to support themselves and their families upon returning from service. I would like the Committee to consider including the bipartisan **HUBS for Veterans Act** (H.R.3720), to support local "network hubs" which streamline access to essential resources for veterans, servicemembers, and their families. I have worked in consultation with the Committee on Veterans' Affairs and the Committee on Education & Labor to ensure the bill's

inclusion in the FY2022, FY2023, and FY2024 House-passed NDAA's. The bipartisan **Military Housing Wait Times Accountability Act** (H.R.5972) would require the Secretary of Defense to provide housing accommodations for members of the Armed Forces and their dependents who are on military housing waitlists. **The Further Strengthening Supply Chains for Servicemembers and Security Act** (H.R.5151) and **Tricare Quality Improvement Act** (H.R.5150) work in tandem to evaluate Tricare beneficiary access to quality network pharmacies. I applauded the committee for including all four of these important provisions in the House-passed FY24 NDAA, but I was disappointed to see that, at the insistence of the Senate, the legislation was not included in the final conference report. For those who have stepped up to serve, we must ensure we are fulfilling our commitment to ensure access to adequate health care, housing, and job training opportunities when they return home.

Finally, I request the committee include two amendments related to research and development that I plan to submit during the upcoming floor process. For more than 70 years, the technological superiority of the United States military has offset the size or geographic advantages of potential adversaries. The rapid evolution of space as a contested military domain requires accelerated development of new technologies and approaches to keep pace with growing threats. I request that the committee authorize \$20 million for the University Consortium for Space Technology. This consortium supports the U.S. Space Force's mission through collaborative research on space-related technology problems, technology transition, and workforce development. Similarly, the Arctic and North Atlantic have rapidly evolved into contested military domains requiring continued research to maintain and improve understanding of the changing dynamics. I request the committee include language to establish the University Centers for Arctic National Security Studies and authorize \$10 million to support its creation. To fully leverage existing capabilities at academic institutions the Committee must support these initiatives to maintain U.S. leadership by translating research into evidence-based policy and training the next-generation workforce.

In closing, thank you Chairman Rogers and Ranking Member Smith for the opportunity to submit testimony regarding some of my NDAA priorities. I look forward to working with the committee on these issues and many more.

Sincerely,

Joe Neguse
Member of Congress