

OPENING REMARKS:

- **Thank you, Chairwoman Maloney, and Chairman Lynch, for inviting me to participate in this hearing today.**
- **Like all of you, I am deeply troubled by the reports of JROTC instructors sexually abusing students under their care.**
- **We give these instructors an immense amount of trust to mold our youth into responsible members of society, and to show them the benefits of military service, but all too often they have unfortunately betrayed that trust.**

- **It is imperative for the Department of Defense to look within itself and assess how they oversee JROTC programs.**
- **It is painfully obvious that there are lapses in oversight and quality control of these programs, stemming both from DOD, and from local schools.**
- **Recently, I toured Austin High in my district, after being approached by several cadets enrolled in their JROTC program.**
- **The cadets complained directly to me, that their facilities were in complete disrepair and were not to an appropriate standard to facilitate a healthy learning environment.**

- **Those cadets felt that their only avenue to address their concerns was to contact their Member of Congress directly, and frankly, that is embarrassing.**
- **While JROTC programs exist throughout the country, 70% of them are in the South and at high-poverty Title I schools, like Austin High in my district.**
- **How can we expect these young people to eagerly join our Nations' Armed Forces if we're teaching them in facilities that are falling apart and giving them instructors who are sexually abusing them before they even enlist?**

- **I have serious concerns about the quality and safety of these programs, so much so, that I led a letter with Rep. Jackie Speier and 35 other Members to DOD expressing those concerns in September of this year.**
- **In my letter, we requested the Department to create a national database of instructors to track accusations of misconduct, increase non-instructor chaperones on JROTC trips, increase training for sexual assault hotline workers, and provide trainings for cadets to know what types of relationships are appropriate, among other provisions.**

- **I look forward to discussing with you all the efforts DOD is taking to increase oversight of these programs, and exactly what policies you are changing to make sure this abuse does not continue.**