

Chair Bruce Westerman, Ranking Members, and all Members of the Committee — thank you for the opportunity to testify.

My name is CW3 (Ret) Brian Wachtendorf. I served honorably for 17 years as a Senior Non-Commissioned Officer and Warrant Officer. I can no longer be silently complicit in the corruption, maltreatment, and retaliatory actions my family and I endured while serving our Nation.

I am here to tell the truth about how systemic failures — privatized housing, negligent leaders, and policies implemented that destroyed my career, harmed my family’s health, and jeopardized the Soldiers I led. The bills under consideration — focus on safer, modern infrastructure, empowering agencies to renovate unsafe housing, and improving federal-land agency efficiency — would address the very failures that harmed us.

(2017–2020) I was rated among the best in my field and was hand-selected for PCS to the 25th Infantry Division. This PCS triggered a chain of administrative and housing failures.

The root cause was not individual error but unclear policy and slow agency action. Had legislation given clear authority and timelines to fix housing and administrative failures, this harm would have been reduced and/or eliminated.

Specific housing failures compounded the damage: an informal dispute over 6714 Iwa Lane (New Construction, concluded 13–18 May 2022) ended without mutual agreement; personal belongings were never fully returned, the items that were returned in June 2022 were improperly cleaned and/or missing, causing allergic reactions and numerous ER visits. Reports of mold and a leaky upstairs bathroom began in November 2021, yet residents had to repeatedly request displacement (requested 27 Apr 2022). IPC’s remediation used contractors with prior ties to IPC staff, inventory and cleaning were poorly documented, and proper testing for mold was not performed. The home at 211 General Loop (Historic Housing) was in an even worse condition, with multiple mycotoxins, chlordane, heptachlor epoxide, DDT, DDE, and various other dangerous and/or toxic chemicals. The General Loop home was later deemed “too costly to repair,” caution taped off, and my family was shuffled between temporary lodgings (Historic Housing) while essential evidence and possessions were mishandled. These procedural and oversight failures—not my performance—created the crisis that ended my career.

While leading and training Soldiers, I repeatedly reported unsafe conditions — no running water, no potable water, no functioning AC, overflowing toilets infested with insects and feces — conditions many Soldiers said were worse than deployments. I used PACOM’s open-door policy to escalate these issues to the Commanding General because they were not being prioritized. I was told that “his hands were tied” because ultimately he could not do anything to direct the PPV. Instead of corrective action, I became a target. The bills’ emphasis on modern, safer

infrastructure and accountable oversight, with specific verbiage on “who, how, and when,” would help prevent leaders from sidestepping responsibility and ensure rapid remediation when hazards are reported.

Simultaneously, my family lived in privatized on-post housing plagued by mold, sewage leaks, rat infestations, and asbestos. Maintenance requests were minimized or mis-categorized; tenant protections and dispute processes under the Military Housing Privatization Initiative were ineffective as a result of unspecific/generalized language, biased toward the housing company, and enforced by installation leadership. We were told the home was “safe.” Legislation that explicitly empowers agencies to rebuild or renovate unsafe military housing and holds contractors and installations accountable would directly address this breakdown and protect families.

We were moved into temporary units repeatedly, our property scattered, my gear lost, and our vehicle stolen. My family developed respiratory illnesses, blood disorders, and skin rashes. I was pressured to withdraw a Compassionate Reassignment request and then offered assignments that seemed designed to sever any link between exposure and our health. At Fort Bliss, environmental conditions worsened my children’s diagnoses. I faced ruined credit and failed attempts to secure safe housing. When I asked not to deploy to stabilize my family, address my extreme blood pressure readings, and heart problems, leadership treated me as if I was merely shirking duty and intensified scrutiny. The bill package’s focus on enabling rapid housing remediation and improving interagency efficiency — including better communications infrastructure — would have helped us get prompt, safe solutions rather than punishment.

The cumulative stress forced me into mental-health care; providers concluded I was not medically stable for deployment. Faced with deployment or medical separation, I chose separation to protect my family. My career ended abruptly as a consequence of raising these issues. I was never paid dependent PCS rates to Fort Bliss, my wife’s medical records were changed in order to discredit my credibility, held liable for missing equipment, denied recognition like the Purple Heart, and received no adequate compensation for lost property, health impacts, or the loss of a career and pension. Practical, results-driven reforms that streamline investigations, repair unsafe housing, and protect families from retaliatory administrative action would reduce the personal and readiness costs I experienced.

This is not only a personal grievance. It reveals how degraded housing, broken dispute systems, and poor infrastructure destroy retention, trust, and readiness. When recruitment and retention falter, it’s because we fail to protect Soldiers and their families. The bills before you — which empower agencies to renovate unsafe housing, modernize and secure infrastructure, and improve

agency efficiency (including communications on federal lands) — translate into concrete protections: safer homes, faster remediation, better communications during crises, and accountability for those who profit from neglect.

I loved this Army and believed in its values. I am asking for truth, accountability, and the reforms these bills provide so no other family endures what mine has. Thank you.