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SUBCOMMITTEE ON MILITARY CONSTRUCTION
COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS

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

Chairwoman Wasserman Schultz, Ranking Member Carter, and distinguished members of this subcommittee, I am honored to appear before you today on behalf of the enlisted men and women of the United States Navy, to discuss some of the most significant issues affecting the quality of life of our enlisted Sailors and their dedicated families. It is my honor to represent approximately 270,000 active duty enlisted Sailors deployed around the world who defend our American values and ideals — freedom, opportunity, and families of all walks of life.

We appreciate the solemn privilege we have as stewards of the public trust and shoulder the responsibility to carefully manage and wisely obligate the resources the American public entrusts to us as their stewards. *The Navy the Nation Needs* demands much from us in this era of great power competition. We must become stronger, faster and effectively build teams to compete and win in high-end warfare at sea. While we currently have the most capable ships and advanced technology, our people have been, and will always be, our greatest advantage in battle against determined adversaries. We must continue to effectively recruit and retain the best talent this Nation has to offer. We must continue to strengthen the technical competence and foster the innovative thinking in our enlisted workforce. These skills enable us to overcome our greatest challenges.

It is crucial that we make the shift from bureaucratic roadblocks to innovative highways. Harvesting innovation means reimagining traditional workflows to maximize efficiency, leveraging ideas that will give us a competitive edge, and developing a more agile workforce empowered to achieve excellence in everything we do and prevail in the maritime battlespace when necessary. We must minimize distractions and keep Sailors laser-focused on deterring emerging global threats and redefining the way war is waged at sea.

Congress is an integral part of our Navy team. Catalysts of our success through your unwavering support, you empower us to do what we are sworn to do: defend American people, values, and national security interests. With that in mind, there are three specific areas I would like to highlight — each of which is tied to Navy readiness and quality of life for Sailors and

their families. Each center around people, policy and processes. Quality of life is directly tied to quality of service and how well we are equipped to meet the national defense strategy.

FAMILY READINESS & CARE

Navy's quality of life programs and services maximize the physical, intellectual, emotional and social development of Sailors and their families. Fleet and Family Readiness programs enable a ready and lethal Navy force, and they build Sailor and family member resilience. Recent studies show that family member quality of life is directly linked service member retention. We are in the second year of executing the Chief of Naval Operations' Navy Family Framework, which reinforces the importance of the role Navy families play in mission success. In 2018, we conducted spouse engagement sessions worldwide, and in 2019 we will roll out a new consolidated source of official information — a mobile app — on support services, resources, and training currently available to Navy families to give them tools to successfully navigate the challenges associated with the military lifestyle.

During recent engagements with Sailors, I have fielded a number of questions and complaints on variety of topics. One common thread I hear at every fleet visit, among Sailors in all paygrades is accessibility to affordable, quality child care. Lack of available and affordable child care is a national issue for our generation. For Navy, it is a critical Readiness issue. Our Navy team must remain vigilant and strong to effectively preserve America's strategic influence and interests around the world. Sailors must be prepared to "fight tonight," constantly ready when we least expect it. We must drill harder and more frequently —for it is sets and reps that will build the muscle memory that ensures overwhelming victory in combat. Our Navy simply cannot afford to lose valuable training hours because of worry and uncertainty over whether a Sailor's child is taken care of in a secure, safe and comfortable child care setting. Nor can we afford to lose talented Sailors should they decide, as some already do, that the Navy is incompatible with having a family. Sailors provide security for all Americans by protecting the homeland 24/7, and in return, we owe it to them to ensure their own families are taken care of so they may better focus on the mission at hand.

Over the past decade, Navy has added 7,000 child care spaces, opened five new 24/7 Child Development Centers in Norfolk, San Diego, and Hawaii; and, where there is a need, extended operating hours from 12 to 14 hours per day. But Sailor demand for child care exceeds Navy's current 44,000 spaces. Today, there are more than 8,000 children waiting for Navy-provided child care. Approximately 2,000 of those children have been on a waitlist for more than six months, some waiting well over a year. Our waiting lists are predominately in our high-cost waterfront cities and fleet concentration areas in California, Virginia, Hawaii, Washington and the National Capital Region.

The challenges facing our Sailors needing affordable, quality child care mirror challenges facing other American families. In 19 states where the majority of our Navy demand resides, there is a cumulative shortfall of 1.4 million child care spaces according to *Child Care Aware of America*. Across the United States, the most common child care arrangement for working parents is through a family member. However, that is not an option for most Sailors, who do not reside near family and, therefore, are unable to rely on family members to help.

For Sailors able to find child care in the community, affordability is a significant challenge, with care costing upwards of 25 percent of total family income. According to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, under the current standard for child care affordability, families should be paying less than seven percent of household income to cover the costs of child care.

We are tirelessly working through various options to address the child care needs of Sailors and their families so they can focus on mission accomplishment, knowing that their families are well cared for. Navy will continue actively seeking public/private partnerships in Fleet concentration areas to increase accessibility of affordable child care that will benefit both Sailors and the local community. We look forward to reporting our progress and appreciate your continuing support and partnership with this critical quality of life initiative.

INFRASTRUCTURE

Critical to quality of life is ensuring Sailors are properly trained to survive in combat — we want each and every one to return safely to their families. To train the finest Sailors in the world, it is of grave importance that our training facilities, particularly those used to train new recruits, are the finest in the world.

A 2017 comprehensive review of basic military training at Recruit Training Command, Great Lakes, determined that firefighting and damage control training is inadequate. The review committee recommended boot camp, a centralized location through which all enlisted sailors must pass, provide new accessions with Navy Level I Basic Damage Control and Fire Fighting Certifications, as defined in Chief of Naval Operations Instruction (OPNAVINST) 3541.1.

Every Sailor must be versed in damage control and firefighting. It is essential that each Sailor knows how to save their ship, their shipmates and themselves in times of peril. Before walking up the brow on their first ship, every Sailor must have experienced rushing water entering a compartment to have some concept of what that is like, and what they are going to do about it, so that they are prepared to fight. This fundamental requirement demands that we upgrade existing facilities.

Consolidating training for these skills at boot camp will provide return on investment, in saved lives alone, to justify the initial expense. Conversely, failing to make this investment in training, will inevitably cost lives. We cannot, in good conscience, allow the dedicated men and women who selflessly volunteer to serve our Nation to go to sea without first preparing them with the very best training available. Funding these facilities is an investment that will not only save lives, but will be the difference between winning or losing in major combat operations at sea, and the only thing more expensive than fighting a war is losing a war.

Infrastructure directly supports ongoing missions and traditional roles of training and housing for Sailors, civilians, and families, so we can ensure they are prepared, confident and proficient. But, over the last decade, the Navy has made difficult choices in infrastructure capital

investments and installation operations funding to support other warfighting, readiness, and modernization requirements. This has taken its toll, and there is work to be done in ensuring our barracks, housing and base facilities are adequate to live and work in. The condition of many Navy facilities impacts Sailors' ability to train, their quality of life, and often requires operational workarounds, such as waivers, temporary facilities, or inefficient processes. Someone who can't sleep because his or her air conditioning doesn't work, won't be able to give their maximum performance on the job. A leaky roof in an office space is a distraction that takes away from the tasks of the day. Providing first-rate infrastructure contributes to a sharper focus on the mission.

SAILOR 2025

Attracting and retaining the best Sailors in an increasingly competitive talent market requires continued flexibility and transparency in policies and practices. Sailor 2025 is the Navy's program to improve and modernize personnel management, training policies, and systems to more effectively identify, recruit and train talented people to better manage the force while improving warfighting readiness.

The modern, innovative, information technology (IT) infrastructure we are building will improve how we recruit, train and retain talent, and assign talent, provide competitive compensation packages and generate a system that provides the kind of flexibility and permeability our Sailors expect and deserve.

We have already implemented a number of important initiatives, including, lengthening maternity leave to 12 weeks, changing our dual military co-location policy, expanding the Career Intermission Program, strengthening advocacy and health and fitness programs across the force, as well as expanding the hours and capacity of Child Development Centers.

We also have a number of initiatives on the horizon, including, overhauling our performance evaluation system; shifting to tailored, advancement exams that focus in on their technical competency and specialty within their rating; streamlining permeability between active

and reserve components; implementing “Detailing Marketplace,” allowing Sailors to negotiate job assignments directly with future commands; and improving the enlisted advancement process.

These initiatives effectively allow us to recruit, develop, manage, reward, and retain talent in our force. Many administrative systems and programs were outdated, overly bureaucratic, and riddled with administrative distractions that took time away from warfighters — keeping them tied up with overly complicated processes instead of focused on training and getting the job done so they could go home to their families.

Today’s Sailors are technically savvy and eager to see our systems evolve on pace with industry standards. The expectation is that they should be able to handle their personal administration in the same secure manner in which they currently conduct banking from a mobile phone. Their time is too valuable to wait in line in an office to conduct transactions that can be routinely accomplished from their smartphones. Just as our platforms and weapon systems have evolved, so must our personnel systems by using cutting edge technologies and following new policies and procedures outlined in our Sailor 2025 initiatives. This as an investment in our future, our Sailors, and even the way we push them to strive for innovation.

Most importantly, these efforts will return time and opportunity to the deck plates, allowing leaders to focus on tactical skills and warfighting readiness. Under Sailor 2025, we are empowering our Sailors.

CONCLUSION

As we continue evolving in this era of great power competition, we recognize that we once again may experience major maritime battles comparable to those of World War II. Adversaries are committing resources in the latest technologies, platforms and weapon systems threatening our National Security interests around the globe in an unprecedented manner.

Through sustained commitment and continued investment in removing distractions and improving training and quality of life, we will ensure our greatest advantage against any adversary — our people — are ready for any fight. The best ships, aircraft, and technology are of limited value without the best trained and most capable men and women to operate them. Investing in personnel and the systems that sustain them will not only drive innovation and excellence, but will ensure our ability to recruit and retain the top talent in America to serve in our Navy.

We appreciate the continuing efforts of Congress to ensure we have all that we need to fight and win. We have and will continue to improve the fleet readiness and quality of life for our Sailors and their families, while remaining responsible stewards of taxpayer resources. Thank you for your steadfast support for the men and women of the United States Navy.