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HOUSE ARMED SERVICES COMMITTEE

STATEMENT
OF
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UNITED STATES MARINE CORPS
BEFORE THE
SUBCOMMITTEE ON PERSONNEL
OF THE
HOUSE ARMED SERVICES COMMITTEE
CONCERNING
DIVERSITY IN RECRUITING AND RETENTION
ON
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INTRODUCTION

Chairwoman Speier, Ranking Member Kelly, and distinguished Members of the Subcommittee, it is my privilege to appear before you today to provide an update on recruiting, retention, and diversity.

Since our founding in 1775, Marines have answered our Nation's call, faithfully serving the American people and maintaining a high standard of military excellence. Then and now, everything starts and ends with the individual Marine. Your Marines are recruited, trained, educated, and retained to win our Nation's battles. They are smart, resilient, fit, disciplined, and able to overcome adversity. Recruiting high quality women and men while retaining the best and brightest whose past service and future potential continues to make the Corps stronger.

The Marine Corps recruits and retains the best Marines, regardless of race, creed, color, or gender. Our overarching goal is combat effectiveness and lethality. Diversity - in background, culture, skills, and thought – is a force multiplier and contributes to the Corps' combat effectiveness and lethality. Diversity not only adds to our readiness and warfighting capability, but also ensures our connectedness with the American people. We are committed to capitalizing on the knowledge, skills, abilities, performance, and potential of every Marine. With your help, we will ensure that we continue to recruit and retain the highest quality Marines for the future fight.

RECRUITING

All Marine Corps recruiting efforts - officer, enlisted, regular, reserve, and prior-service - fall under the Marine Corps Recruiting Command. This is unique amongst the services. Operationally, this provides us with tremendous flexibility and unity of command, facilitating efforts to meet accession and end strength requirements.

Last fiscal year, we successfully achieved all enlisted and officer recruiting goals for both the active and reserve components, and we expect to do the same this year. We also exceeded all quality goals. The Department of Defense requires 90 percent of enlistees to be in Education Tier 1 (high school diploma or equivalent), and 60 percent of enlistees to score in the Mental Groups I-III A (highest mental aptitudes). Last year, the Marine Corps achieved 99.5 percent for Education Tier 1, and 70.3 percent for Mental Group I-III A. We expect to be at or near these levels in FY20.

To meet the challenges ahead, we remain committed to assigning our best Marines to recruiting duty. We must also continue to adequately fund both recruiting operations and advertising. Our advertising program is vital to building awareness of the Marine Corps among high-quality, diverse population groups that are increasingly disconnected from military service. A strong advertising program enables our recruiting command to attract and recruit the highest quality accession cohorts which, in turn, results in lower first-term attrition and ultimately higher quality Marines.

We appreciate Congress' support for the priority programs that assist us in contracting high quality Marine recruits. Recruiting quality young individuals translates into higher performance, reduced attrition, and improved readiness for the operating forces. Our prioritization of, and investment in, recruiting ensure a high state of readiness for our Corps.

RETENTION

The Marine Corps seeks to retain the very best Marines capable of fulfilling our leadership and operational needs. This is a continuous challenge, especially in a competitive civilian job market. Our officer career designation incorporates a board system that enables leaders to examine officer accomplishments, performance, and future potential. After career designation, the

promotion process continues the evaluation of Marine officers. It is a primary tool by which we promote and retain only the best and most qualified Marines.

For enlisted Marines, a tiered rating system takes into account a number of quantifiable performance factors and includes inputs from both immediate and more senior leaders. After initial reenlistment, the evaluation and continued retention of high-quality enlisted Marines is supported by a detailed and continual performance evaluation system (PES) which is fully integrated with the promotion process. Those Marines with the best proven performance are retained and promoted.

Always striving for improvement, we are working to modernize our PES to provide all pertinent information to selection, retention and promotion boards. Our upgraded PES will improve and simplify the evaluations for our junior enlisted Marines in the ranks of Private through Corporal so we can better identify our highest caliber Marines for retention. Once complete, the PES will better align with our current automated system used to evaluate Sergeants and above and all officers. This modernized PES will ensure a detailed and objective evaluation for all Marines. It will provide leaders a broader and more detailed baseline from which to evaluate future potential, reinforcing our efforts to retain the best and most qualified Marines.

Along with improvements to the PES, the Marine Corps will be implementing an Early Reenlistment Program in FY21, which will allow very high performing Marines to apply to reenlist one year early. Also in FY21, we will be authorizing a delegation of reenlistment authority, which will give Commanding Generals the authority to directly reenlist qualified Marines. These programs will create a more agile and flexible retention process that considers the desires of the individual Marine and provides flexibility to the subordinate commanders in an effort to increase the retention of high-quality Marines.

Incentive pays remain critical to our retention effort, allowing the Marine Corps to fill hard-to-retain positions, such as cyber security technicians, special operators, and counter intelligence

specialists. Selective Reenlistment Bonuses allow us to shape our career force by targeting critical military occupational specialties (MOSs) and supporting lateral movement of Marines to these MOSs. For example, although the Marine Corps has sufficient qualified aviators in all deployable units, there are shortfalls in certain grades of fixed wing and tiltrotor aviators to fill all aviation billet requirements. As a result, the Marine Corps implemented an aviation bonus authority in FY18 to stabilize the population of critical-retention communities and facilitate the proper execution of all aviation staffing demands. We have continued to use this authority in a narrowly-tailored way in FY20 through expanded obligation periods and increased monetary packages. Overall, incentive pays help us recruit and retain the best Marines, especially in critical skills. Retaining qualified Marines in these skills keeps your Marine Corps lethal and prepared to overmatch our adversaries. At only one percent of our Marine Corps personnel budget, these pays provide return on investment many times over.

As we look toward the future, we are focusing efforts on data collection and management and using predictive analytics to guide retention efforts and overall talent management. These efforts include improving current data collection and management; longitudinal accession, retention, and exit surveys; and cognitive and non-cognitive testing with the objective of identifying and fitting the right person, with the right skill, into the optimal billet at the most opportune time for both the individual and the Corps.

DIVERSITY

In the Marine Corps, effective leadership and decision-making is essential to achieving mission success. Diversity and inclusion are critical to this end. Cultural, ethnic, gender, and socio-economic diversity remain an imperative for the Marine Corps. On top of the necessity to recruit from the largest possible demographic, we must stay closely connected to the American citizenry

whose continued support for the Marine Corps is vital. It is our responsibility to ensure the Marine Corps is manned by the best and brightest from every segment of our diverse society.

The data shows that your Marine Corps is becoming a more diverse organization. In every year since at least 2009, the Marine Corps increased the proportion of Marines who identify as minorities. Today, over 40% of your Marines (enlisted 42%; officer 27%) identify as minorities. And we expect these numbers to continue to rise - 45% of all enlisted accessions and 31% of all officer accessions in FY19 identify as minorities. These increased accessions are a direct result in large part to the hard work of our recruiting force and a robust outreach program with diverse communities and organizations.

Similarly, the percentage of female Marines has risen and now represents 8.9% of the Marine Corps (enlisted 9%; officer 8.5%) up from 6.7% in 2010. These numbers should also continue to rise as, in both FY18 and FY19, females comprised over 10% of all accessions. In fact, in FY19, 12.7% of officer accessions were females, representing the highest percentage, and highest number, of female officer accessions since the establishment of the all-volunteer force. Females are currently represented in all previously-restricted occupational fields, and we recently graduated the first female F35 pilot and first female Reconnaissance Marine. To continue this upward trajectory, the Marine Corps Recruiting Command has increased its female-inclusive marketing (e.g. *A Nation's Call* commercial) and advertising (e.g. 30% of all direct mail is sent to females) to generate awareness and highlight opportunities for females in the Marine Corps.

In regard to retention, the Marine Corps has not experienced difficulties in retaining female Marines. Male and female Marines exhibit different retention behavioral patterns, but the aggregate retention rates are very similar. The data shows that female enlisted Marines retain at a higher rate than males at the first reenlistment opportunity, but they retain at a lower rate at later career

milestones. Retention of female officers is the opposite; they retain at lower rates than males at the early stages of a career, but higher later on (at 12 year mark and beyond).

Quality of life programs are a very important way to positively influence retention, including of diverse members. The adage “we recruit Marines, we retain families” remains as true today as ever. For example, our Child and Youth Programs (CYP) provide eligible families with high quality, accessible, and affordable programs and services for children six-weeks to 18-years of age. Services are offered aboard Marine Corps installations and through contractual partnerships. One part of CYP is our Child Development Programs, which include nationally accredited child care services for eligible children from six-weeks through 12-years of age. In FY18, CDP served 41,385 children at 14 installations in 66 facilities; we expect similar numbers for FY19. For those military families living outside a 15-mile radius of a military installation or on an installation waitlist, we offer Off-Base Child Care Fee Assistance, which provides eligible Marines with assistance paying for private childcare.

High-quality child care is a family-readiness priority for the Marine Corps. Currently, the Marine Corps has a total unmet need of approximately 1,303 spaces, with notable waitlists at Camp Pendleton, MCB Hawaii and MCB Quantico. These are primarily due to a shortage of qualified workers; high turnover/low pay; lengthy hiring/background check process; and seasonal PCS fluctuations. There is also a waitlist at MCB Lejeune/New River due to capacity. We are addressing these issues as part of the DoD Compensation, Recruitment and Retention Working Group and are in the process of implementing a non-competitive child care employee transfer program. The Off-base Fee Assistance program also provides financial support to Marine families who are not in close proximity to a CDC or who are on a waitlist.

All Marine leaders are responsible for leveraging diversity and inclusion through their daily actions and leadership decisions - recognizing the unique attributes of each individual and

integrating their strengths into the Marine Corps. All Marines, Sailors, and civilians are needed for the fight. Diversity must be included in meaningful ways in order to take advantage of the wide array of aptitudes and perspectives necessary to maintain our current and future warfighting excellence. We are committed to capitalizing on the knowledge, skills, abilities, performance, and potential of every Marine.

CONCLUSION

The Marines of our Corps represent the individuals of our Nation who have stepped forward and sworn to defend and protect it. Through recruiting, training, education, and retention of men and women of character who take up our challenge to become one of “the Few and the Proud,” we will enhance the quality of our Corps and our overall combat effectiveness. 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.

Our individual Marines are our most precious asset. They are proud of what they do. They are proud of the “Eagle, Globe, and Anchor” and what it represents to our Nation. With your support, a vibrant Marine Corps will continue to meet our Nation’s call.

Thank you again for the opportunity to be here today.