

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

August 12, 2019

The Honorable Adam Smith
Chairman
House Armed Services Committee
2216 Rayburn Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Mac Thornberry
Ranking Member
House Armed Services Committee
2216 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Jim Inhofe
Chairman
Senate Armed Services Committee
205 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Jack Reed
Ranking Member
Senate Armed Services Committee
228 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Chairman Smith, Chairman Inhofe, Ranking Member Thornberry, and Ranking Member Reed:

As you begin conference negotiations on the Fiscal Year (FY) 2020 National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA), we write to urge the preservation of bipartisan provisions related to diversity and inclusion. At a time when the military services are facing a shrinking recruiting pool, improving the Department of Defense's (the Department) ability to access a wide range of talented individuals is critical. Our armed forces must be at the forefront of grappling with our most difficult tasks and challenges – it is only appropriate that we take the necessary steps to ensure that our military has the diversity that can help it tackle them.

As stated in the Department's most recent five-year Strategic Plan for Diversity and Inclusion, "diversity is a strategic imperative, critical to mission readiness and accomplishment, and a leadership requirement." Preserving diversity across our military – including enlisted personnel and the officer corps – supports creative problem solving and decision making and contributes to mutual understanding of other countries and cultures. Moreover, a diverse military force reflects our values as a democratic society, improving public perception and trust in our armed forces.

Beyond reflecting our democratic values and building a force that looks like our nation, diversity leads to improved performance. Studies have shown that diversity leads to innovation, improved problem solving, and greater ability to anticipate alternative viewpoints, thereby increasing the capacity and capability of the force. For example, female Marines in combat units deployed to

Iraq were able to conduct searches and collect actionable intelligence among local women. Additionally, American troops with diverse backgrounds bring cultural and linguistic knowledge that are essential as the United States conducts operations or maintains a presence in locations around the world.

Despite progress in recent decades – racial and ethnic minorities comprised 25 percent of the active-duty military in 1990, but now make up approximately 40 percent – more work needs to be done. Diversity has increased overall, but not in the officer corps. For example, those of Hispanic origin account for approximately 18 percent of enlisted personnel, but only about 8 percent of the officer corps and 2 percent of General/Flag officers. Similarly, African-Americans account for nearly 20 percent of enlisted personnel, but only 8 percent of the overall officer corps and 8 percent of General/Flag officers. Women make up just 17 percent of the active-duty force, and while they account for nearly 19 percent of the officer corps, they comprise less than 10 percent of the highest leadership positions. Asian-Americans comprise only approximately 4 percent of enlisted personnel, and while they account for 5 percent of the officer corps, they comprise less than 2 percent of the highest leadership positions. Native Americans, it should be noted, serve at the highest rate per capita of any ethnic group, despite experiencing continued discrimination within the ranks.

Additionally, in FY 2017, minority and women applicants to every service received a lower average Armed Forces Qualification Test (AFQT) score than white and male applicants. Not only is this broadly concerning, but as AFQT scores determine what applicants are able to pursue upon enlistment, this phenomenon undoubtedly also contributes to the lack of diversity in certain fields and pathways. We must ensure that the force is both generally diverse and diverse within all fields – and we must invest in education in our disadvantaged communities to ensure that they are able to meet the standards for all aspects of military service.

Addressing this discrepancy requires investments in our servicemembers, our institutions, and our education system to ensure the Armed Services has the diverse talent it needs to meet our national security challenges. We are pleased to see many important bipartisan provisions on this subject included in the FY 2020 NDAA passed by the House, H.R. 2500. To ensure we build upon the progress made in recent years and continue to grow our strategic advantage, we urge you to preserve the following bipartisan provisions in the conferenced bill:

1. **Sec. 222. Diversification of the science, technology, research, and engineering workforce of the Department of Defense.** Requires the Department to issue a report on the number of minorities and women in the workforce, the effectiveness of incentives, and a plan for increasing their participation.
2. **Sec. 240. National Security Commission on Defense Research at Historically Black Colleges and Universities and Other Minority Institutions.** Forms the National Security Commission on Defense Research Conducted by HBCUs to address inequality in defense funding. This provision was included via an en bloc package in committee. Additionally, the Commission, in consultation with the Secretary of Education and

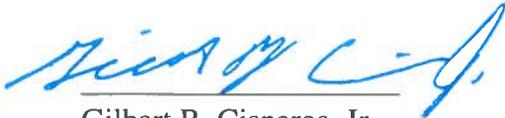
- Secretary of Defense, will provide a list of eligible institutions that may apply for funding. This provision was included via an en bloc package on the House floor.
3. **Increase to the HBCU/Minority Serving Institution (MSI) program.** Maintain a \$50M funding level for the HBCU/MSI program.
 4. **Sec. 526. Strategic plan for diversity and inclusion.** Requires the Department of Defense to develop an updated strategic plan for diversity and inclusion.
 5. **Sec. 530. Nondiscrimination with respect to service in the Armed Forces.** Codifies the military's existing non-discrimination standards and requires that all service members be afforded equal opportunity in an environment free from harassment, including sexual harassment, and unlawful discrimination on the basis of race, color, national origin, religion, sex (including gender identity), or sexual orientation. Included via a bipartisan vote on a House floor amendment, 242 to 187.
 6. **Sec. 597. Report on certain waivers received by transgender individuals.** Requires the Pentagon to report on individuals affected by the transgender service ban, thus helping track and quantify the costs of exclusionary policy. This provision was included via an en bloc package on the House floor.
 7. **Sec. 540A. Assessment of racial, ethnic, and gender disparities in the military justice system.** Requires the Department of Defense to improve its ability to detect and address racial, ethnic, and gender disparities in the military justice system. This provision was included via an en bloc package on the House floor.
 8. **Sec. 594. Questions in workplace surveys regarding supremacist, extremist, and racist activity.** Directs the Department of Defense to update the workplace and equal opportunity and workplace and gender relations surveys to include experiences with supremacist activity, extremist activity, or racism. This provision was included via an en bloc package in committee.
 9. **Sec. 871. Consideration of subcontracting to minority institutions.** Requires the Department of Defense to ensure that the system used by the Federal Government to monitor or record contractor past performance for a grant or contract awarded to an institution of higher education includes incentives for the award of a sub-grant or subcontract to minority institutions. This provision was included via an en bloc package in committee.
 10. **Sec. 881. Permanent authorization and improvement of Department of Defense Mentor-Protege Program.** Provides permanent authorization for the Department of Defense Mentor-Protege program that encourages the growth of disadvantaged business enterprises through partnerships with established defense contractors. This provision was included via an en bloc package in committee.
 11. **Sec. 913. Modernization of certain forms and surveys.** Requires the Department of Defense to review their forms for racially insensitive terms and develop a modernization plan to address identified issues. This provision was included via an en bloc package in committee.

The provisions listed above – all of which were included in the bill on a bipartisan basis – will enable and encourage the Department to more effectively diversify its workforce and retain

diverse personnel. Additionally, these provisions will enable the Department to more fully access the broad range of diverse talent available in the United States.

We commend you on your leadership and commitment to our servicemembers, and we urge you to preserve these bipartisan provisions related to diversity and inclusion in the final FY 2020 NDAA.

Sincerely,



Gilbert R. Cisneros, Jr.
Member of Congress



Anthony Brown
Member of Congress



Chrissy Houlahan
Member of Congress



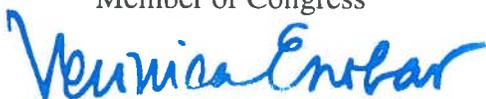
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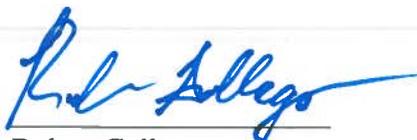
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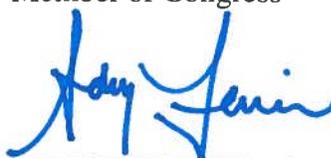
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United States Senator



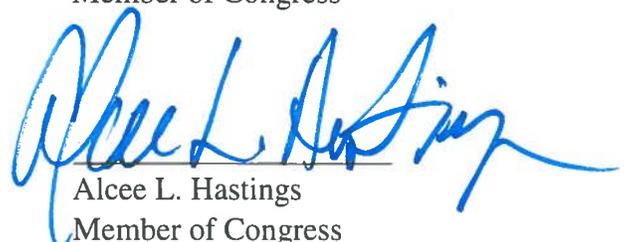
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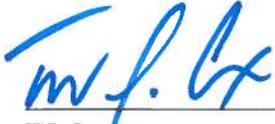
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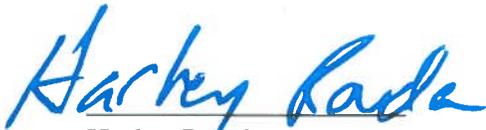
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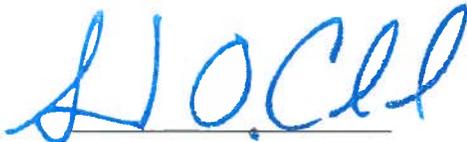
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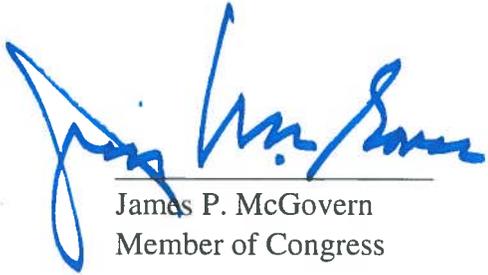
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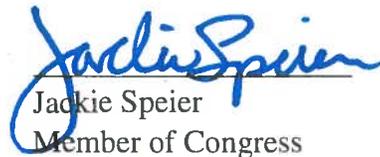
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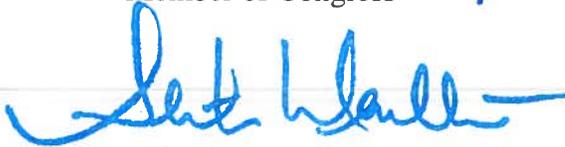
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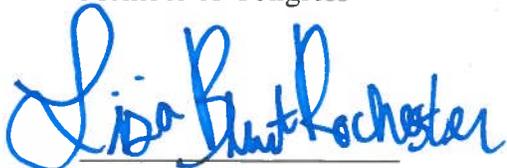
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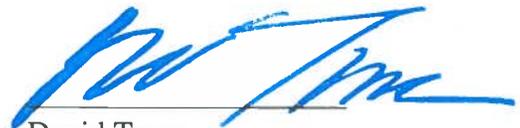

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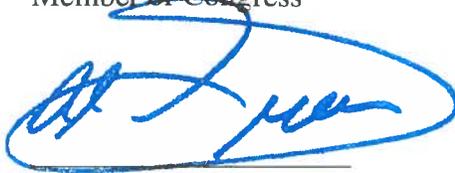

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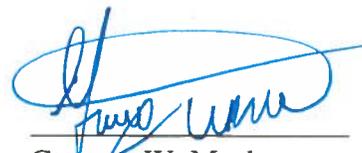

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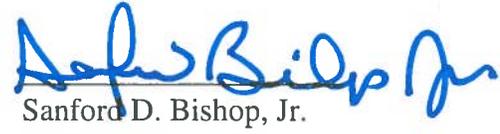
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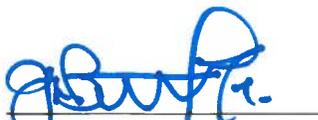
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