

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

May 15, 2023

The Honorable Lloyd J. Austin III
Secretary of Defense
1000 Defense Pentagon
Washington, DC 20301-1000

Dear Secretary Austin,

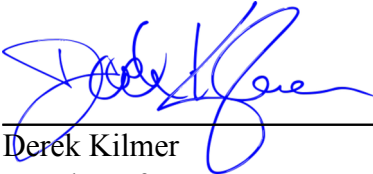
Thank you for your continued service to our country both in uniform and as the Secretary of Defense. We write to you today to highlight potential improvements for the Department of Defense's (DoD) Transition Assistance Program (TAP). As you know, servicemembers often struggle translating their military experiences to their civilian lives. Fortunately, this mandatory program provides tailored assistance to separating servicemembers so they can identify job opportunities, pursue further training or higher education, and ultimately meet their post-military goals. We know you are a strong supporter of this program and we share your commitment to assisting servicemembers' successful transition from active duty service to civilian life.

With this in mind, we want to bring your attention to the Government Accountability Office's (GAO) report titled "Servicemembers Transitioning to Civilian Life: DOD Can Better Leverage Performance Information to Improve Participation in Counseling Pathways" (GAO-23-104538), a draft of which was transmitted to your department on October 19, 2022. This report outlines several shortcomings with the current TAP program including finding nearly 25% of transitioning servicemembers needing greatest assistance did not attend the optional two-day classes on employment, higher education, vocational training, and entrepreneurship. Furthermore, the report shows 70% of all transitioning servicemembers did not start TAP on time. Although operational commitments will always pose difficulties for servicemembers completing this important training the current rate of waivers and deferrals is far higher than should reasonably be expected. As soldiers transition from active-duty service this critical period simply cannot be overlooked.

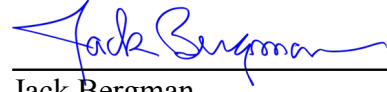
As you are likely aware, GAO has provided eight recommendations for increasing servicemembers' participation in and timeliness of the program which we wholeheartedly support. We were pleased to see that DoD promptly responded to GAO's draft report with concurrence on all eight of these recommendations. However, we also respectfully request a detailed execution plan and timeline outlining DoD's strategy for adopting these recommendations to ensure our servicemembers experience a smooth transition from active-duty service.

Thank you for your diligent service to our nation and its servicemembers, and for your attention regarding this important matter. We look forward to learning more about your department's plan to work with the armed services and make improvements which will help the Transition Assistance Program reach more of our servicemembers to ensure they succeed in their futures outside the military. Please have the appropriate member of your staff be in touch with Ben Donovan in Representative Kilmer's office (Ben.Donovan@mail.house.gov) to share your response.

Sincerely,



Derek Kilmer
Member of Congress



Jack Bergman
Member of Congress

Ed Case

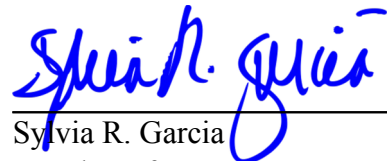
Ed Case
Member of Congress



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Marilyn Strickland
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Patrick K. Ryan
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JM Tokuda
Member of Congress



Marie Gluesenkamp Perez
Member of Congress



Scott DesJarlais, M.D.
Member of Congress



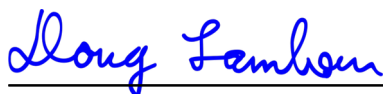
Seth Moulton
Member of Congress



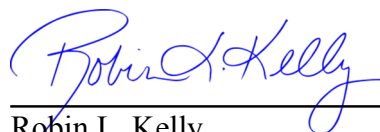
Don Bacon
Member of Congress



Salud Carbajal
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