

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

October 13, 2023

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

Dear Secretary Austin:

We are writing to express our concern regarding findings of a U.S. Government Accountability Office (GAO) report that detailed poor living conditions in U.S. military barracks. The report, published on September 19, 2023, described barracks that “pose potentially serious health and safety risks” to servicemembers and did not meet Department of Defense (DOD) standards “for privacy and configuration.” The report also troublingly noted that DOD does not reliably track information on barracks’ conditions, nor could DOD identify the amount of funding it puts towards barracks’ sustainment.¹

There are tens of thousands of servicemembers living in military barracks currently impacted by substandard living conditions. This is unacceptable. Urgent and sustained action is needed to improve living conditions at military barracks and to provide the quality of housing that the men and women of our Armed Forces deserve.

We request your prioritized attention in fully and expeditiously implementing all of GAO’s 31 recommendations to DOD regarding military barracks improvements. Leadership and oversight are needed to ensure living conditions at military barracks are effectively and systematically tracked, regularly assessed and reported on in a timely manner, and appropriately funded moving forward.

We also urge DOD to take immediate action in addressing unsafe living conditions that were explicitly described throughout the report. This includes reports of mold, broken fire systems, sewage leaks, dirty water, broken windows, and inadequate lighting, among others. We request that DOD provide an update on any interim actions taken in this regard.

We are cautiously optimistic that DOD has acknowledged these issues and plans to include a multi-year investment strategy as part of its FY2025 budget request.² We request that DOD provide information on how it plans to assess and prioritize the military barracks improvements between now and February 2024. We look forward to seeing the sustainment of military barracks prioritized as part of this forthcoming request and will be closely monitoring any such developments.

Thank you for your attention to this matter. It is of critical importance to the lives of the men and women serving our country.

¹ <https://www.gao.gov/products/gao-23-105797>

² <https://www.defense.gov/News/News-Stories/Article/Article/3542431/military-service-leaders-address-deficiencies-in-barracks/>

Sincerely,



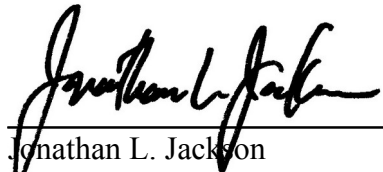
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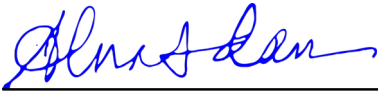
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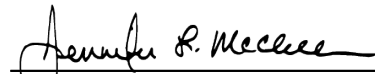
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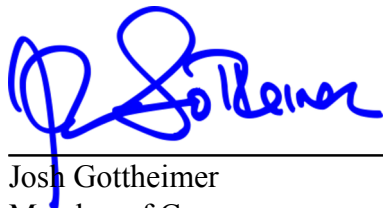
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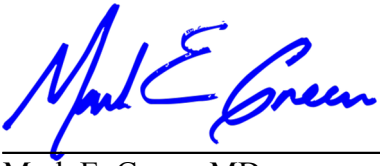
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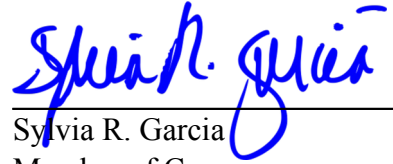
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cc: Secretary of the Navy, Carlos Del Toro
Secretary of the Army, Christine Wormuth
Secretary of the Air Force, Frank Kendall III
Assistant Secretary of Defense for Energy, Installations and Environment, Brendan
Owens