

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

November 12, 2024

Secretary Lloyd J. Austin III
U.S. Department of Defense
1000 Defense Pentagon
Washington, DC 20301-1000

Dear Secretary Lloyd Austin,

Our service members both at home and abroad sacrifice a great deal in defense of our nation. As Members of Congress representing various Department of Defense (DoD) installations, we are deeply concerned with the state of military barracks nationwide. The widespread problems in military barracks affect the morale and wellbeing of our service members, and some of these problems represent significant health and safety risks. Furthermore, in the midst of a national recruiting crisis, social media has only continued to reveal perpetual, unaddressed issues with the barracks that no doubt impact recruitment.

In September 2023, the Government Accountability Office (GAO) published a report on the poor state of barracks habitability across 10 DoD installations. Included in this report were 31 recommendations, and we thank you for the work you are currently doing to implement them. Of these, two had a near-term estimated implementation date from the Office of the Secretary of Defense (OSD).¹

Recommendation 2 requests clarification on DoD guidance on minimum standards for assignment to barracks related to health and safety, such as identifying health and safety risks serious enough to prevent installations from assigning service members to live in a barracks facility or room. GAO has shared that the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Energy, Installations, and Environment [ASD(EI&E)] has established a team that is developing a new barracks health, safety, and livability standards, which were set to be completed by July 31, 2024. We understand that DoD estimated an updated completion date on this recommendation by September 30, 2024.

Recommendation 30 called for the establishment of an oversight structure, such as quarterly programmatic reviews, to increase oversight of military service barracks housing programs, including roles and responsibilities for relevant OSD offices. GAO shared that ASD(EI&E) planned to issue policy establishing an oversight structure and program metrics for military barracks by July 31, 2024. Owing to the efforts of your Unaccompanied Housing (UH) Tiger Team, DoD has updated the estimated completion date for establishment of an oversight structure to December 13, 2024.

We urge you to prioritize the adoption of these recommendations, and to prioritize the wellbeing of our service members by ensuring timely and effective implementation of the necessary

¹GAO Report on Barracks Habitability: <https://www.gao.gov/products/gao-23-105797>

standards and oversight structures. We also ask that you provide an update to our offices by December 15, 2024, on the status, if not completion of these two recommendations as well as overall progress you have made across all other recommendations.

The health, safety, and morale of our service members are paramount, and we must take swift action to address these critical issues.

Thank you for your attention to this urgent matter.

Sincerely,



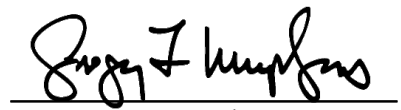
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Member of Congress



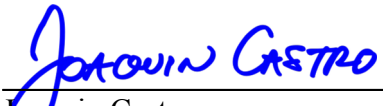
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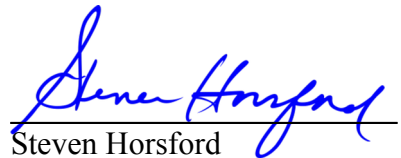
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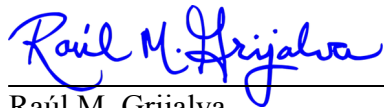
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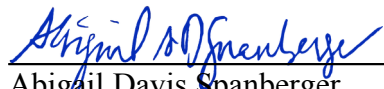
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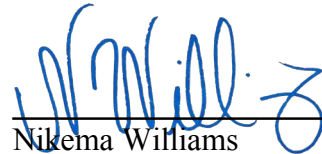
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