September 12, 2019

The Honorable Jim Inhofe
Chairman
Senate Armed Services Committee
228 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510-6050

The Honorable Jack Reed
Ranking Member
Senate Armed Services Committee
228 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510-6050

Dear Chairman Inhofe and Ranking Member Reed:

We are writing to express support for the Military Family Basic Needs Allowance that was included in the House National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA). On July 12, 2019, the U.S. House of Representatives passed the Military Family Basic Needs Allowance. To best support our military members, the men and women who need our help the most, we strongly recommend you keep this provision in the NDAA Conference Report.

In 2016, a report by the Government Accountability Office uncovered thousands of military families experiencing food insecurity\(^1\). The culmination of the unique challenges associated with military service—frequent moves, high rates of spousal unemployment, lack of nearby family support, and limited access to affordable child care—make it even more difficult to provide for a family. Most recently, during the 2018-2019 school year, one third of military children at Department of Defense-run schools in the United States were eligible for free or reduced-price lunch\(^2\). The Military Family Basic Needs Allowance would provide a bipartisan solution to this unacceptable situation.

The vast majority of recipients who would qualify for the allowance would be low-ranking enlisted service members with multiple dependents. This allowance would only apply to those with basic pay at or below 130% of the Federal Poverty Line. The program is a lifeline to service men and women in need; it would provide struggling military families with the assistance they deserve.

Additionally, military readiness can only be achieved if basic needs are provided for. This allowance would ensure service members are able to provide for their family members, eliminating unnecessary stress and anxiety, while also contributing to mission effectiveness. Furthermore, support for families’ basic needs would reduce the overall tax on the military healthcare system by providing additional access to better sources of nutrition. Over the long run,


this would improve health outcomes, reduce chronic diet-related health conditions, and bolster the overall effectiveness of the force.

We urge you to prioritize inclusion of the Military Family Basic Needs Allowance in the final NDAA Conference Report. Those who make significant sacrifices for our country should never struggle to meet their family’s basic needs.

Sincerely,

Tammy Duckworth  
United States Senator

Lisa Murkowski  
United States Senator

Tina Smith  
United States Senator

Kamala D. Harris  
United States Senator

Sherrod Brown  
United States Senator

Patty Murray  
United States Senator

Amy Klobuchar  
United States Senator

Elizabeth Warren  
United States Senator

Chris Van Hollen  
United States Senator

Richard Blumenthal  
United States Senator
Cory A. Booker
United States Senator