

FY 2022 House Defense Appropriations Report Memo

MILITARY FAMILIES AND FOOD INSECURITY (p. 17)

The Committee is concerned by the **alarming rate of food insecurity faced by military families**. While servicemembers and their families may have access to government food assistance, their ability to qualify can vary by program and location, forcing **servicemembers to seek charitable food assistance or limit the ability to eat healthy or nutritious food**. **The coronavirus pandemic and its economic repercussions have only magnified the problem of food insecurity experienced by military families**. For National Guard and reserve personnel, the past year of near constant deployments to respond to the pandemic, civil unrest, and natural disasters has exacerbated the problem of food insecurity. Recent data from the United States Census Bureau found hunger among guardsmen and reservists is more than double the national rate. The Committee notes the Secretary of Defense is required to submit a report providing an assessment of the current extent of food insecurity among servicemembers and their dependents as directed by the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2020. **The Committee directs the Secretary of Defense to provide the report to the House and Senate Appropriations Committees in conjunction with its submission to the House and Senate Armed Services Committees and to provide a briefing to the House and Senate Appropriations Committees not later than 30 days after the submission of the report.**

MILITARY FOOD TRANSFORMATION (p.58)

The Committee remains concerned about the **growing obesity crisis in the Department of Defense and its impact on military recruitment, readiness, and retention**. To address this challenge, the Committee directs the Secretary of Defense to **establish a food transformation cell**, similar to the office that led the Healthy Base Initiative, not later than 90 days after the enactment of this Act. The food transformation cell shall be composed of **subject matter experts in food service operations who possess knowledge of modern healthy food delivery systems** and an understanding of all aspects of Department of Defense laws and policies related to food service. This cell should develop and execute a plan for improving on-base accessibility to healthfully prepared and pre-prepared food. The plan should leverage leading practices from university and private-sector campus dining, and lessons learned from previous Department of Defense food service transformation efforts. The Committee directs the Secretary of Defense to submit a report to the congressional defense committees not later than 120 days after the enactment of this Act which provides an outline of these efforts. Further, the Committee encourages the Secretary of Defense to use the Department's proposed plan to conduct demonstration pilots at two installations per Service. Where appropriate, pilot sites should partner with the local community to **improve the food environment and encourage smart eating**. The goal of each pilot should be to develop and test appropriate business models that increase the availability, affordability, and acceptability of healthy performance foods. Each pilot should also include expansion of the use of the meal card by servicemembers at exchange-controlled food locations and morale, welfare, and recreation-controlled food locations.

COMBAT READINESS MEDICAL RESEARCH PROGRAM (p. 327)

The Committee recommendation includes **\$10,000,000 for the Combat Readiness Medical Research program**. The program should focus on medical needs of the warfighter on the battlefield. Research should address the "golden hour" for servicemembers with life threatening injuries, battlefield

diagnostics, and medical threats and treatments for warfighters deployed around the world. The Committee expects the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Health Affairs to identify current gaps in medical planning and resources, consider medical capabilities that may mitigate fatalities, enhance battlefield diagnostics, and find solutions for life threatening complications after battlefield injury. The funding in the Combat Readiness Medical Research program should be used for research and development of rapidly deployable, all-in-one acute and chronic wound care therapy engineered to address complex trauma and start tissue regeneration; repairing or restoring damaged or missing genitourinary organs and tissue; freeze dried plasma and platelets; portable neurological devices in support of mild traumatic brain injury assessment; hand-held detection devices for traumatic brain injury; head trauma injury; ruggedized oxygen generation systems; medical simulation technology; sleep disorders; eating disorders; extracorporeal life support; myalgic encephalomyelitis/chronic fatigue syndrome; regenerative medicine; sarcoidosis; valley fever; complementary health measures to accelerate return to duty; highly infectious disease treatment and transport; preventing and relieving service-related arthritis; and telemedicine.

MENTAL HEALTH PROFESSIONALS (p. 330)

The Committee remains concerned about the shortage of current and prospective mental health care professionals for servicemembers and their families, including social workers, clinical psychologists, and psychiatrists. The Committee directs the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Health Affairs, in coordination with the Service Surgeons General, to brief the House and Senate Appropriations Committees not later than 180 days after the enactment of this Act on an assessment of eligible beneficiaries' demand for behavioral health services, including services provided through telehealth, and funding required to adequately recruit and retain behavioral health professionals required to meet such demand. The assessment shall include a review of tools, such as pay grade increases, use of special and incentive pays, and the pipeline development of increasing the number of professionals in this field through scholarships or programs through the Uniformed Services University. Additionally, the assessment should include a review of related regulations to determine what impact a change in regulations to allow the employment of clinical psychologists who graduate from schools accredited by the Psychological Clinical Science Accreditation System may have on the Military Health System.

ADDRESSING HEALTH BARRIERS TO MILITARY SERVICE (p. 333)

The Committee is concerned that 71 percent of Americans between the ages of 17 to 24 are ineligible for military service due to obesity, mental and other physical health conditions, or substance abuse. The Committee directs the Secretary of Defense, in coordination with the Service Secretaries, to submit a report to the congressional defense committees not later than 180 days after the enactment of this Act on existing military fitness and nutrition initiatives and campaigns. The report shall include the metrics used to assess the effectiveness of these efforts in recruiting or retaining servicemembers; the resources available to assist applicants and recruits in meeting physical fitness standards in cases where potential applicants or recruits may be disqualified due to a failure of meeting standards; the return on investment from these efforts; and the anticipated costs of the military health system for treating obesity-related health conditions across military, civilian, dependent, and retiree populations. Additionally, the Committee recognizes that federal support for childhood nutrition, food security, physical education, mental and physical health, and substance abuse prevention benefits all Americans, including those who intend to serve in the military. The Committee believes that the Department of Defense has an obligation

to both ensure a ready and fit-to-fight force and to help promote 334 the health of civilians. The Committee encourages the Secretary of Defense to coordinate with the Secretaries of Agriculture and Health and Human Services to identify ways that the Department could contribute to informing physical fitness or nutritional standards for children and young adults across the nation.