

**Thank you, Chairman Rogers,
Ranking Member Smith, and
colleagues, for the opportunity
to testify before the Committee
for the FY27 National Defense
Authorization Act (NDAA).**

**In 2021, my district, the 29th
Congressional District of Texas,
suffered a terrible loss after U.S.
Army Specialist Vanessa Guillen
was sexually assaulted and
murdered by a fellow service
member in Fort Hood, TX.**

**Her death led to the passage of
the I am Vanessa Guillen Act
that ultimately moved the
prosecution of sexual assault
and harassment cases outside
of the chain of command.**

Vanessa's legacy continues to drive my work in Congress.

These reforms, supported by this committee, have strengthened protections for our service members, but our work is far from over.

We must continue advocating for the prevention, response, and reduction of sexual misconduct across the Armed Forces.

This is why I ask that you prioritize and continue supporting Department of Defense initiatives, programs, and offices dedicated to protecting our men and women in uniform.

That includes the Offices of Special Trial Counsel, Office of Special Victims Counsel, and the Sexual Assault Prevention Response Program within all branches of the Armed Forces.

Building on this commitment, I would like to talk about our service members' quality of life.

Those who volunteer to serve our nation often endure frequent deployments, demanding working schedules, family separation, and the physical and mental demands associated with military service.

Similarly, these challenges also take a toll on spouses and children, who are forced to deal with constant moves and long periods of separation from their loved ones.

Often times our service members and their families must move to high-cost areas, forcing them to cover expenses out of their pockets, as the Basic Allowance for Housing is not enough to cover.

Even worse, our service members do not have access to reliable childcare services. Often forced to deal with long waitlists and staffing shortages.

Offering proper Basic Allowance for Housing (BAH) is critical to make sure that our service members and their families can access reliable and affordable housing.

At the same time, we must provide adequate childcare services and properly staff childcare centers to make sure military parents can perform their duties, knowing that their children are taken care of.

Addressing these issues will raise morale, retention, and give our men and women in uniform a good quality of life.

Lastly, I urge the Committee to continue supporting the U.S. shipbuilding industrial base.

The U.S. faces immense competition from adversaries, and the shipyards' industrial base cannot currently meet the production demands for either commercial or military purposes.

Our shipbuilding industry continues to deal with workforce shortages, decaying shipyards and infrastructure, and supply chain delays that have ultimately hindered the modernization of our military ships.

I urge the committee to continue providing the shipbuilding industry with the resources it needs to modernize military shipyards, expand training programs to grow skilled shipbuilders, improve worker retention, and strengthen the current supply chain to continue supporting ship construction and maintenance.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman, Ranking Member, and members of this Committee. I yield back.