

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

January 21, 2022

The Honorable Gilbert R. Cisneros Jr.
Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness
4000 Defense Pentagon
Washington, DC 20301-4000

Dear Under Secretary Cisneros,

The military services have made significant progress toward advancing inclusion of LGBTQ+ personnel, thanks in part to your efforts. Most current servicemembers have experienced open service for lesbian, gay, and bisexual servicemembers for the majority of their careers, and we hope the same will be said ten years from now for transgender personnel.

We know from recent history that some gains can prove transient. The services must do all they can to establish inclusive and welcoming environments for current servicemembers, regardless of sexual orientation and gender identity. To this end, we write to request that the Department conduct a survey of current servicemembers on LGBTQ+ inclusion in the Armed Forces.

The 10-year anniversary of the repeal of “Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell” and the recent reversal (for the second time) of the prohibition on service by transgender individuals is an appropriate time to assess the current state of open service and its impact on military personnel. While the military included a question about sexual orientation in the biannual Women and Gender Relations Survey of Active-Duty Members (WGRA), it has not asked about gender identity or specifically surveyed servicemembers about their experience related to open service. In the most recent WGRA, conducted in 2018, 14% of female servicemembers identified as lesbian or bisexual, and 4% of male servicemembers identified as gay or bisexual. Extrapolated across the population of active duty servicemembers, in 2018, roughly 30,000 servicewomen and 44,000 servicemen identified as lesbian, gay, or bisexual, and the true number may be higher because 7% of servicewomen and 5% of servicemen indicated that they prefer not to answer the question about sexual orientation. No such statistics are available for trans servicemembers.

We believe that a survey of military personnel regarding the state of inclusion of LGBTQ+ servicemembers is overdue and would provide valuable information to advance the military’s goal of a respectful and welcoming culture that promotes equal opportunity. Questions to that effect could be integrated into either an existing survey instrument or implemented as a standalone survey. We would propose that such a survey include, at minimum, questions on the following topics:

- Whether LGBTQ+ servicemembers feel included and valued by their colleagues and respective military services.
- The incidence of social and professional discrimination experienced by LGBTQ+ servicemembers on the basis of their sexual orientation or gender identity.
- Whether and how policies related to leave, dependents, family readiness, childcare, relocation, the Transition Assistance Program, and other installation services are inclusive and meet the needs of LGBTQ+ servicemembers and their dependents.
- Perceptions by non-LGBTQ+ servicemembers of inclusion of, and discrimination toward, LGBTQ+ servicemembers.
- Whether and how the medical needs of LGBTQ+ servicemembers and their dependents are sufficiently met by the Military Health System (MHS), including specific questions about the cultural competency and inclusiveness of MHS medical providers.

Thank you for your consideration of this request. We look forward to your reply and to working with you on these important issues. The staff contacts for this request are Peter Tyler (Peter.Tyler@mail.house.gov) for the House Veterans' Affairs Committee and Ilka Regino (Ilka.Regino@mail.house.gov) for the House Armed Services Committee.

Sincerely,



Mark Takano, Chairman
Veterans' Affairs



Adam Smith, Chairman
Armed Services



Jackie Speier, Chair
Military Personnel
Subcommittee