

NOT FOR PUBLICATION
UNTIL RELEASED BY THE
HOUSE ARMED SERVICES COMMITTEE
SUBCOMMITTEE ON MILITARY PERSONNEL

**STATEMENT OF
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**REGARDING
DIVERSITY, EQUITY, AND INCLUSION**

BEFORE THE

**HOUSE ARMED SERVICES COMMITTEE
SUBCOMMITTEE ON MILITARY PERSONNEL**

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Introduction

Good afternoon, Chairman Banks, Ranking Member Kim, and distinguished members of the subcommittee. I appreciate the opportunity to appear before you today to discuss the Department of the Navy's progress and challenges on diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility (DEIA).

I want to convey on behalf of Secretary Del Toro and the senior Department of the Navy civilian and military leadership that our ultimate objective is to produce the best combat-ready naval forces in the world. We must do this in the era of the all-volunteer force. To meet our mission, we must therefore make the idea of service attractive to all Americans. I believe in this mission, and I believe in this approach. As many leaders in the Department of the Navy have said in recent years, the best way to accomplish this is to build a force that reflects the America it serves. We strive to cultivate a force that draws strength from America's boundless diversity, one that seeks out the intrinsic value in our differences, woven into an inclusive Maritime Force that not only incorporates racial and gender diversity, but diverse experience and varied backgrounds to include religion, ethnicity, and culture. The act of inclusion enables us to bridge our collective differences and solve problems on and away from the battlefield. Inclusion is founded on respect, which breeds trust, fostering healthier command climates and, thereby, fostering readiness.

Our greatest asset is our Sailors, Marines, and their families, caregivers, and survivors, along with our civilian workforce. To retain our competitive advantage in these times when we face unpredictable threats and global challenges and competition for talent, we must leverage the strengths of all our people. Valuing diversity is a way of enabling all segments of our society to understand that their capacity to serve is valued, and to help create conditions in which they will

not only want to serve, but also will stay and have the opportunity to realize their full potential. This will allow the Navy and Marine Corps to more effectively message the value of service and to more fully avail ourselves of the best possible talent that all of America has to offer.

Establish Data-Driven Approaches

Our Navy and Marine Corps team must foster a culture of warfighting excellence. Treating each other with dignity and respect is foundational to that effort. To that end, we are exploring data-driven approaches to increase our understanding of existing challenges, and improve our efforts to address them.

Recruiting

We are making progress in creating an environment that embraces DEIA. Our country is more diverse than ever. However, that diversity is not fully reflected in our military, especially in the senior military leadership ranks. Similarly, the majority of our service members come from only a portion of our nation, leaving other parts of the country less represented.

Competing in today's complex global environment requires us to expand our geographic diversity to find the most innovative and open-minded cadre of recruits from every part of this great nation. Harnessing a new generation of talent will best be accomplished by actively seeking to incorporate skilled individuals from all regions, backgrounds, and segments of society. We have identified areas where the Department can improve by examining our accession and promotion pipelines to ensure that we access the full scope of our nation's talent and we value the service of all of our Sailors and Marines.

Retention

The retention of the best and brightest from all corners of America is equally important. As leaders, we must concentrate on the fundamentals of good leadership, knowing that engaging our people, supporting their development, and equipping them to succeed will help them find fulfillment in their careers, consistent with their faithful commitment to serving our country. Further, that fulfillment, coupled with the FY 2024 budget request for pay, allowances, incentives, parental leave, dependent care, and childcare, not only improves our retention efforts, but enhance our ability to communicate the tangible and intangible benefits of service to the full scope of our nation.

Conclusion

Our Nation needs a strong, well-trained, and well-equipped Navy and Marine Corps to address the wide array of challenges and threats facing it. To be a combat-ready force, we must leverage the strengths of all our people. We are doing our utmost to build a force that draws from, and therefore reflects, our entire nation, thereby increasing our military readiness and maritime dominance by accessing the full range of our nation's talent.

As we look forward to the future, we must not take for granted what makes our Navy and Marine Corps unparalleled and unmatched - the people – Active, Reserve, civilians, and their families—who serve this country. I look forward to working with you to ensure that our efforts meaningfully and effectively support the well-being of our Sailors, Marines, civilians, and their families and that we always best position them to fulfill their vital roles in support of our national security interests.

Thank you for the opportunity to appear today. I stand ready to answer your questions.