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## COMMITTEE ON ARMED SERVICES

U.S. House of Representatives

Washington, DC 20515-6035

ONE HUNDRED FOURTEENTH CONGRESS

July 17, 2015

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The Honorable Ashton B. Carter  
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General Martin E. Dempsey  
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Dear Mr. Secretary and General Dempsey:

The issue of military accession and retention of transgender personnel is complex and multifaceted. Secretary Carter recently announced the creation of a working group to consider the policy and readiness implications of allowing transgender service members to serve openly. I support your effort to review existing policies in an effort to provide greater clarity to current and potential service members. However, I am concerned that the review may not be objective if it has, as has been stated, a predetermined outcome: a "presumption that transgender persons can serve openly without adverse impact on military effectiveness and readiness." Instead, the review must be an honest and balanced assessment of the impact that any potential policy change would have on military readiness, cohesion, morale, and good order and discipline.

Ultimately, the major responsibilities of this committee are to provide oversight of the Armed Forces and ensure that any legislation enacted improves military readiness. In order to perform these functions, we must have sufficient information to determine why the Department believes change is needed and what impact a change will have on military readiness, cohesion, morale, and good order and discipline.

Such information must come from a detailed, objective assessment. Furthermore, the assessment must capture the views, perspectives, and judgments of those who would be most affected by a change in policy: military personnel of all ranks and their families and potential members of the all-volunteer military.

In order for this committee to provide oversight on this complex issue, we will require from the military services and the Department of Defense information on the following matters:

- To what extent has the current accession and retention policies regarding transgender service members hindered the military's ability in a measurable way to recruit and retain qualified personnel to meet service manpower requirements?

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- How many service members have been separated for being transgender or for a diagnosis of gender dysphoria in the last ten years?
- To what extent does the discharge of personnel under these policies create a measurable impact on readiness of the force?
- The medical and behavioral health considerations attendant with being transgender or a diagnosis of gender dysphoria can be significant. Given that the Department of Defense is currently reviewing the medical standards required for military service, why is this additional study required prior to concluding the medical standards study?
- To what extent would a change in current policies affect military readiness, cohesion, morale, and good order and discipline? What effect would such a change have on the number of service members who would be non-deployable for medical reasons? What is the nature of the other effects that might be expected upon changing policies? Would these effects be of short duration or an extended duration?
- To what degree and how would a change in current policies improve military readiness?
- Would a change in current policies improve military family readiness?
- What effect would a change in the transgender service policy have on recruiting and retention? Would repeal of the current law significantly improve the military's ability to attract and retain personnel to meet service manpower requirements?
- If the transgender service policy is changed, at what phase of gender transition would an individual be recognized as their desired gender, assigned housing commensurate with their desired gender, and be expected to adhere to those physical fitness and uniform and grooming standards? At what point would service members transitioning to male be allowed to apply for closed military occupational specialties?
- What effect would change in policies have on the propensity of prospective recruits to enlist and on the propensity of influencers (parents, coaches, teachers, religious leaders, for example) to recommend military service?
- Other than changes to the military departments' policies, what changes to other federal statutes (including those regulating the Department of Veterans Affairs), Federal Regulations, and Department of Defense and Department of Veterans Affairs policies would be required for the new transgender service policy to be effective in promoting readiness, morale, and cohesion?

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- The Department of Defense recently modified its equal opportunity policy to prohibit discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation. What, if any, additional non-discrimination measures would be required if the transgender service policy is changed? What training would be required for all service members? What implementation challenges would there be? What measures would be required to overcome those challenges?
- What would be the projected costs of changing the transgender service policy? To what extent would military barracks, ship berths, gym shower facilities, latrines, and other facilities have to be modified to accommodate personnel in various stages of transition and what would be the projected cost of these modifications?
- If the transgender service policy is changed, to what extent would the Department of Defense provide medical treatment for transgender service members, including behavioral health treatment, cross-hormone therapy, voice therapy, cosmetic or gender reassignment surgery, and other treatments?

The ability of Congress to provide oversight regarding this issue is heavily dependent upon its ability to obtain credible, substantive, comprehensive, and objective data and information. Many voices have entered their opinions about the need for change. However, this committee and Members of Congress also have a duty to hear directly from the Department of Defense.

Thank you for your attention to this matter. I look forward to your response no later than August 14, 2015.

Sincerely,



William M. "Mac" Thornberry  
Chairman

WMT:cb