

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

December 3, 2020

The Honorable Joseph R. Biden, Jr
1401 Constitution Avenue, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20230

Dear President-elect Biden:

We write to offer our strong support for Michèle Flournoy to serve as Secretary of Defense. Several of us have had the honor of engaging with Ms. Flournoy over many years, and we believe she has earned her reputation as a preeminent policy expert and someone with exceptional integrity. We are confident that she is the best and most qualified person for the job. Her steadfast leadership and guidance will help to steer the Department of Defense in the best interest of your administration and the American people in the face of significant national security challenges.

Apart from her exceptional national security acumen and character, Michèle Flournoy's nomination and confirmation as Secretary of Defense would be a symbolic moment for the United States, and for all women who over the years have aspired to careers in national security but have been met with biases and discriminatory policies within the male-dominated Department. As women proudly serving in the U.S. House of Representatives, we know the importance of female trailblazers. We believe that young women need someone to look up to, to show them that women can excel in any given field, and to mentor them. All of us have benefited from those who came before us. To date, there has never been a woman who has served as Secretary of Defense. Young women striving to lead in national security deserve a trailblazer to look up to, and we encourage you to make history by nominating Michèle Flournoy as the next Secretary of Defense.

Ms. Flournoy is eminently qualified to serve and to further your administration's national security agenda. Having twice served at the Department of Defense, she understands how to make the bureaucracy work for a president's agenda. As the former Under Secretary of Defense for Policy, she has an unmatched understanding of the policy challenges facing the United States military and our nation. She also knows that America is great only when it is also good – that is why she serves on the board of directors of CARE and has pushed for larger USAID and State Department budgets.

Critically to us, Ms. Flournoy has been a strong advocate for women in national security, including female servicemembers, and for survivors of military sexual assault. She has mentored and promoted hundreds of women who have served at the Department of Defense, Department of State, National Security Council, and, indeed, on many of the Biden-Harris Transition Agency

Review Teams. She pushed to lift the “exclusion rule” which prevented women from serving in combat roles and thus limited their ability to receive promotions. She believes in “paying it forward,” serving on the honorary advisory committee of the Leadership Council for Women in National Security. She has also looked for solutions for military sexual assault. She advocated for addressing sexual assault allegations at more senior levels of the military and for a “zero tolerance” policy for sexual assault – a policy she argued must be strictly enforced.

We the undersigned can think of few better examples for aspiring female leaders than Ms. Flournoy. We hope you will give her candidacy your strongest consideration and help break the Pentagon’s glass ceiling.

Sincerely,



Jackie Speier
Member of Congress



Lois Frankel
Member of Congress



Veronica Escobar
Member of Congress



Julia Brownley
Member of Congress



Anna G. Eshoo
Member of Congress



Lizzie Fletcher
Member of Congress



Ann McLane Kuster
Member of Congress