

Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515-0512

December 9, 2021

The Honorable Christine E. Wormuth
Secretary of the Army
101 Army Pentagon
Washington, DC 20310-0101

Dear Secretary Wormuth:

Congratulations on your confirmation as Secretary of the Army. We are writing to ask that you prioritize child care needs for Soldiers in the Army's FY23 budget request. We have engaged with the Department and your predecessors on this issue, including through letters and at hearings during the FY22 budget cycle, where we have sought strong funding as well as information about ongoing efforts to improve access to child care.

We were extremely disappointed that the Army did not include any funds for Child Development Center (CDC) military construction projects in its FY22 budget request, and only two on the Unfunded Priority List (UPL). This marks two years in a row without a CDC military construction (MILCON) project in the Army's request despite having 19 CDCs in "Poor" or "Failing" condition and thousands of children with immediate need for care on waitlists.¹ This must be a higher priority, as it impacts the wellbeing of servicemembers and military families, as well as the readiness of the force.

We also fully appreciate that CDC capacity is only part of the equation when it comes to improving military child care, which is why we ask that your FY23 budget request also specify additional funding for programs to increase the child care workforce as well as expand fee assistance availability. The Army must examine ways to increase recruiting and retention of child care workers that reflects the critical role they play in supporting military family readiness. Fee assistance programs will also broaden the care that is available to military families.

In addition to asking that you submit a robust request for child care funding in the FY23 budget, we ask that you provide the following information regarding long-term plans to us:

- At the start of FY22, how many children with immediate need for child care were on the Army's waitlists?
- What ongoing efforts is the Army making to decrease the number of Soldiers on the child care waitlist with immediate need? What efforts are under consideration for the future?

¹ Department of Defense, "Report to the Congressional Defense Committees on Department of Defense Child Development Programs," 2020.

- What efforts is the Army considering to improve the recruiting and retention of child care workers at CDCs? What was the average pay for workers at Army CDCs at the beginning of FY22, and what plans does the Department have to increase compensation for child care workers going forward?
- What is the amount of money allocated for child care fee assistance for FY22?
- How many Soldiers were approved for fee assistance in FY21? How many were denied fee assistance? What was the total amount spent on fee assistance in FY21?

Thank you for your attention to this critical issue. The staff contact for this issue is Brian Collins in Rep. Speier’s office (brian.collins@mail.house.gov). We look forward to your reply.

Sincerely,



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Member of Congress



Veronica Escobar
Member of Congress



Sara Jacobs
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