

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

December 9, 2021

The Honorable Frank Kendall
Secretary of the Air Force
1670 Air Force Pentagon
Washington, DC 20330-1670

Dear Secretary Kendall:

Congratulations on your confirmation as Secretary of the Air Force. We are writing to ask that you prioritize child care needs for Airmen and Guardians in the Department of the Air Force'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. While we were pleased that the Air Force had more Child Development Center (CDC) military construction projects in its budget request and unfunded priorities list than any other service, there is still much more work that needs to be done.

There are still an unacceptably high number of Air Force CDCs that are in substandard condition, according to the 2020 DoD report to Congress.¹ While we are aware there was a discrepancy in evaluative standards used by the Air Force and DoD in compiling data for that report, we are nonetheless deeply concerned that without increased attentiveness there will soon be a real crisis of facility habitability.

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 Air Force and Space Force 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 to us:

- At the start of FY22, how many children with immediate need for child care were on the Air Force's and Space Force's waitlists?

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

- What ongoing efforts are the Air Force and Space Force making to decrease the number of Airmen and Guardians on the child care waitlist with immediate need? What efforts are under consideration for the future?
- What efforts are the Air Force and Space Force considering to improve the recruiting and retention of child care workers at CDCs? What was the average pay for workers at Air Force and Space Force 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 Airmen and Guardians 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,



Jackie Speier
Member of Congress



Veronica Escobar
Member of Congress



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