



July 22, 2020

The Honorable James Inhofe
Chairman
The Honorable Jack Reed
Ranking Member
Armed Services Committee
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Adam Smith
Chairman
The Honorable Mac Thornberry
Ranking Member
Armed Services Committee
United States House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Inhofe, Ranking Member Reed, Chairman Smith, and Ranking Member Thornberry:

The Military Coalition (TMC), a consortium of organizations representing 5.5 million service members, veterans, their families and survivors, urges you to put a halt to planned military medical downsizing and implement additional reporting requirements and Congressional oversight into the process before it restarts. Specifically, we ask that two provisions from H.R. 6395 are included in the FY21 National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA): Sec. 715 – *Modification to Limitation on the Realignment or Reduction of Military Medical Manning End Strength* and Sec. 716 – *Modifications to Implementation Plan for Restructure or Realignment of Military Medical Treatment Facilities*.

We understand COVID-19 has forced a delay to MHS reform efforts, but we believe legislation is needed to ensure both MTF restructuring and proposed medical billet cuts allow for transparency, stakeholder feedback, and Congressional oversight.

TMC supports military health system (MHS) reforms aimed at increasing military medical provider readiness, achieving efficiencies, and improving the patient experience, but we are skeptical the Department of Defense (DoD) can successfully transition large numbers of beneficiaries to civilian care as noted in our previous [letter](#) to Personnel subcommittee leadership.

Findings in the recently released GAO report, *Defense Health Care: Additional Information and Monitoring Needed to Better Position DoD for Restructuring Medical Treatment Facilities*, further amplify TMC's concerns about potential problems with beneficiary access to care. The report highlights shortfalls with DoD's plan for restructuring the direct care system of military hospitals and clinics that put access to care for military families at risk:

- DoD's analysis omitted major areas of concern that would contribute to the success of military treatment facility (MTF) downsizing/restructuring – specifically, the availability of high quality civilian medical care in communities surrounding restructured MTFs. The analysis did not verify the accuracy of the TRICARE provider directory, assess quality of providers, or determine whether providers were accepting new patients.
- DoD's plan for restructuring MTFs does not evaluate primary care graduate medical education (GME) programs and non-GME training. GME and non-GME training programs conducted within MTFs are critical to the uniformed provider pipeline. GME cuts could negatively impact not only readiness but also beneficiary access to care.

- DoD says it will reverse or slow an MTF transition if needed to address any challenges that arise with ensuring patients' ability to access health care. However, DoD's plan does not discuss conditions that would warrant slowing or reversing an MTF's restructure, or how the need for such an adjustment would be determined.

We appreciate the House Armed Services Committee FY21 NDAA mark includes provisions to halt medical billet cuts and MTF restructuring so further analysis, mitigation planning, and Congressional oversight can be incorporated into the process. Moving forward, we urge you to ensure that Sec. 715 and Sec. 716 of H.R. 6395 are included in the final legislation.

Sincerely,



Jack Du Teil
President,
The Military Coalition

See attached list of organizations

Air Force Association (AFA)
Air Force Sergeants Association (AFSA)
Army Aviation Association of America (AAAA)
Association of Military Surgeons of the United States (AMSUS)
Association of the United States Navy (AUSN)
Blinded Veterans Association (BVA)
Chief Warrant and Warrant Officers Association of the US Coast Guard (CWOA)
Commissioned Officers Association of the U.S. Public Health Service, Inc. (COA)
Enlisted Association of the National Guard of the United States (EANGUS)
Fleet Reserve Association (FRA)
Gold Star Wives of America (GSW)
Jewish War Veterans of the United States of America (JWV)
Marine Corps League (MCL)
Marine Corps Reserve Association (MCRA)
Military Chaplains Association
Military Officers Association of America (MOAA)
Non Commissioned Officers Association (NCOA)
Naval Enlisted Reserve Association (NERA)
National Military Family Association (NMFA)
Service Women's Action Network (SWAN)
Tragedy Assistance Program for Survivors (TAPS)
The Retired Enlisted Association (TREA)
U.S. Coast Guard Chief Petty Officers Association (CPOA)
United States Army Warrant Officers Association (USAWOA)
Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW)
Vietnam Veterans of America
Wounded Warrior Project (WWP)