

United States Senate
WASHINGTON, DC 20510

May 20, 2022

The Honorable Jon Tester
Chairman
Senate Veterans' Affairs Committee
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Jerry Moran
Ranking Member
Senate Veterans' Affairs Committee
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Jack Reed
Chairmen
Senate Armed Services Committee
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable James Inhofe
Ranking Member
Senate Armed Services Committee
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Chairman Tester, Ranking Member Moran, Chairman Reed and Ranking Member Inhofe:

We respectfully request a joint hearing of the Senate Veterans' Affairs Committee and the Senate Armed Forces Subcommittee on Personnel before the end of the 117th Congress to address the growing concerns surrounding the veteran transition programs and related services. Both Committees have acted on these issues, and it is time to convene together for a wholistic view and bring both the Department of Defense and the Veterans Affairs before both committees at the same time.

The Senate Armed Forces and Veterans' Affairs Committees have both received testimony from top Department of Defense and Department of Veterans' Affairs officials concerning the alarming rate of veteran suicide that take place while service members are transitioning away from service in the armed forces. Additionally, veterans requiring continuing medical care are hindered due to the cumbersome and inefficient process of transitioning medical records from the DoD systems to the VA.

This is an appropriate and timely topic for both Committees. The Government Accountability Office is scheduled to submit several NDAA directed reports that address facets of this topic at the end of the 2022 summer. These reports include: Servicemember Transition Counseling, Veterans High Tech Education, and VA Solid Start. Therefore, we recommend that the joint hearing be scheduled for late-August to September to include their findings and assessments in the testimony.

Potential topics we request to be addressed include: Increased risk to suicide during the transition process, Transition Assistance Programs (TAP) allocated/required time, TAP resources at CONUS locations versus remote or austere locations, ineffective virtual TAP processes, oversight processes for implementing GAO recommendations, and expanding TAP resources to drive workforce development, transition suicide assessments and prevention initiatives.

We believe it is imperative that these service members are provided adequate care and assistance as they transition away from years of honorable service into the civilian workforce.

Sincerely,

