

December 14, 2017

President Donald J. Trump
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Ave., NW
Washington, DC 20500

Dear President Trump:

We, the undersigned, representing hundreds of thousands of Americans, want to thank you for your commitment to our nation's security interests and military readiness. Specifically, your August 2017 Presidential Memorandum for the Secretary of Defense and the Secretary of Homeland Security on Military Service by Transgender Individuals, in which you instructed the Department of Defense (DOD) to reverse President Obama's July 1, 2016 harmful policy in this area, was essential for restoring military readiness. As you know, the DOD followed up with interim guidance on September 14, 2017, and we await the final guidance on the issue.

However, as a result of different lawsuits that have been filed against your administration regarding this policy, several federal judges have issued opinions granting preliminary relief to the challengers—most notably one by Judge Colleen Kollar-Kotelly from the U.S. District Court for the District of Columbia ordering that your administration begin recruiting transgendered individuals beginning on January 1, 2018. The Department of Justice is appealing that order, though it is by no means clear how the courts will rule on this matter—a military matter on which, considering your commander-in-chief function and the national security implications, they are required to defer to the executive branch.

Therefore, we write as a group to express concerns regarding matters of military readiness along with the social well-being of our military in light of these alarming court orders. At a time when there is widespread concern over the decline of military readiness in the U.S. armed forces, our military has become involved in an extravagant and novel social program involving individuals who will be unable to serve effectively for extended periods of time due to their need for medical and psychological care. There is no evidence to suggest that the DOD adequately addressed the impact President Obama's policy experiment would have on military readiness given the costs and physical effects of gender transition. Additionally, no consideration was given to the conscience and religious rights of military personnel who may be required to share close quarters, including showers, with individuals of the opposite sex. Nor were the conscience and religious rights of military personnel addressed for those who may have objections to providing transgender health services, such as hormone therapy, gender reassignment surgery, or counseling.

If implemented, the policy ordered by Judge Kollar-Kotelly would result in conflicts with religious liberty similar to those that arose for military persons of faith in the wake of the repeal of the "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" policy. For example, despite statutory protections for religious freedom, which were strengthened recently in the FY 2013 and FY2014 National Defense Authorization Act, continued examples of discrimination against military persons of faith

occurred because of their views about human sexuality and marriage. In 2015, Lt. Commander Wes Modder, a chaplain, was removed from his post and recommended for detachment for cause and involuntary separation from the Navy for privately counseling a service member in accordance with his endorsing faith tradition's view on human sexuality and marriage. Only after a vigorous defense were all claims against Chaplain Modder rejected, and he was restored to full military service. Earlier this year, decorated Air Force Colonel Leland Bohannon was suspended from duty, relieved of his command, and removed from consideration for a promotion after he sought a religious exemption from being forced to sign a subordinate's "certificate of spouse appreciation" for a same-sex marriage. Col. Bohannon's case is still ongoing, but regardless of the outcome his years of distinguished service have been irrevocably tarnished. That these men faced religious discrimination, even after Congress had passed stronger conscience protections, renews concerns about how military persons of faith will be negatively impacted by a comprehensive DOD policy recruiting individuals who self-identify as transgender to serve in our nation's military.

If the courts overturn your policy as initially ordered by those like Judge Kollar-Kotelly, the cost to the military could be as high as \$3.7 billion over ten years, based on the cost of treatments, surgeries, post-operative care and lost time—not to mention the cost associated with training military personnel about those who self-identify as transgender. The focus of military training should be combat effectiveness, not social engineering.

For these reasons, we urge you to continue appealing such judicial orders, but also to call on Congress to prevent funding for any change to your policy in the next relevant appropriations bill which funds the Department of Defense. Time is of the essence. This will ensure our military focuses on its mission of fighting and winning wars, not experimenting with our troops' social lives.

Thank you for your attention to this matter.

Sincerely,

cc:

The Honorable James Mattis
Secretary of Defense
1400 Defense Pentagon
Washington, DC 20301

Speaker of the House Paul Ryan (R-WI)
Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell (R-KY)
Senate Appropriations Committee Chairman Thad Cochran (R-MS)
House Appropriations Committee Chairman Rodney Frelinghuysen (R-NJ)