

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

October 2, 2023

Dr. Michael Strobl
Assistant Deputy Commandant for Manpower & Reserve Affairs
United States Marine Corps
3280 Russel Road
Quantico, VA 22134

Dear Dr. Strobl,

Thank you for testifying at the House Armed Services Committee's Subcommittee on Military Personnel's September 20, 2023, hearing on meritocracy in military accessions and selections. We appreciate your participation.

At last week's hearing, Republicans on the Subcommittee raised concerns about each service's ability to retain merit-based standards in the face of pressure from the Biden administration and Department of Defense (DoD) leadership. For example, the DoD's Strategic Management Plan directs all services to increase the "promotion/retention of members of underrepresented populations from the previous year." Even after last week's hearing, it remains unclear to us how the Marine Corps or any of our services could develop a strategy to increase the number of promotions given to certain races and or sexes without factoring race or sex into their selection processes.

The Marines Corps recently started its first-ever Diversity Aimed Officer Program (DAOP). Accepted applicants were taken on a trip to Washington, D.C. region from August 15-19, 2023, to tour the Officer Candidate School (OCS), The Basic School (TBS), Marine Corps Recruiting Command (MCRC), Marine Corps University (MCU), the National Museum of the Marine Corps, and Marine Barracks Washington.

According to a FAQ flier on the Marines Corps' website, the purpose of the program is "to harness the talent and potential of our current Marines by providing education and mentorship to overcome any challenges toward seeking a commission and career as a Marine Corps officer." The same flier states that "[t]he main audience of this opportunity is historically underrepresented populations (minorities and females). However, application to DAOP is open to all Marines and all submitted packages will be evaluated."

To us, the flier's language strongly suggests that the race and gender of applicants are important factors in the DAOP evaluation process, which would contradict the spirit of your testimony before the Military Personnel Subcommittee this month and also clearly runs counter to Executive Order 9981, which desegregated the armed forces. E.O. 9981 states that "there shall be

equality of treatment and opportunity for all persons in the armed services without regard to race, color, religion or national origin.”

In your written testimony before last week’s hearing, you stated that “the Corps takes pride in its commitment to recognizing and rewarding excellence among its ranks in a fair, transparent, and methodical way.”

We appreciate your commitments to meritocracy and to transparency, and we agree that all servicemembers must be judged by their efforts and abilities, and never by their innate characteristics. As well as being a moral necessity, merit-based personnel policies in the armed forces are indispensable to our national security and military readiness.

As such, we are requesting the following information and documents no later than October 15, 2023.

1. A memorandum summarizing the Marines Corps’ criteria for acceptance into the DAOP program, as well as any relevant admissions documents.
2. An anonymized list of every applicant that applied to the Marines’ DAOP program, noting:
 - a. Whether each applicant belongs to an underrepresented group;
 - b. On what criteria each applicant was determined to belong to an underrepresented group; and
 - c. Whether each applicant was accepted or rejected.

Sincerely,



Jim Banks
Member of Congress



Mark Alford
Member of Congress