



PERSONNEL AND
READINESS

UNDER SECRETARY OF DEFENSE
4000 DEFENSE PENTAGON
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20301-4000

MAR 14 2023

The Honorable Roger F. Wicker
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Wicker:

Thank you for your letter to the Secretary of Defense regarding his October 20, 2022 memorandum, "Ensuring Access to Reproductive Health Care," and the recent release of Department policies on Service member privacy related to pregnancy and access to reproductive health care. I am responding on the Secretary's behalf as these matters fall under my purview.

On October 20, 2022, the Secretary of Defense signed a memorandum directing additional actions to ensure Service members and their families can access reproductive health care and Department of Defense health care providers are able to operate effectively, consistent with Federal law. On February 16, 2023, the Department released policies on command notification of pregnancy, administrative absence for non-covered reproductive health care, and travel allowances for non-covered reproductive health care. These policies reinforce the Secretary of Defense's commitment to taking care of our people, protecting their health and well-being, and ensuring the force remains ready and resilient.

As of March 2023, Service members are afforded the option—similar to their civilian counterparts—of having up to 20 weeks before they are required to notify their commanders of pregnancy, except in certain circumstances in which earlier notification is necessary based upon individual circumstances of the Service member and mission requirements. This provides Service members the time and flexibility to make personal health care decisions. Service members and eligible dependents may also use an administrative absence and travel allowance to access assisted reproductive technology to help them in building a family. Approximately 130 military medical treatment facilities offer walk-in contraceptive counseling and services, including the full scope of non-surgical, same-day contraceptive methods, without a referral or appointment. Service members are also granted 12 weeks of non-chargeable, paid parental leave following the birth of a child, adoption of a minor child, or placement of a minor child for adoption or long-term foster care. Lastly, Service members and eligible dependents are given the time, space, and resources necessary to access lawfully available health care that may not be available within the local area of their duty station. However, Service members are still required to pay for non-covered reproductive health care, to include non-covered abortions and assisted reproductive technology.

Due to the nature of military service, Service members do not choose where they are stationed or assigned. The policies on administrative absence and travel allowances for non-covered reproductive health ensure access to reproductive health care irrespective of a Service member's duty station or assignment. To mitigate the impact of certain assignment locations,

Service members are authorized several allowances, benefits, and entitlements based on their geographic location. Examples of other allowances, benefits, and entitlements that Service members are authorized based on duty station or assignment location include remote and austere conditions assignment incentive pay, cold weather duty, authorization of assignment or special duty pay, continuous overseas tour travel entitlement, environmental morale leave, basic housing allowances, cost of living allowances, and dependent student travel, among others. All these policies are intended to increase the emotional and physical well-being of all Service members and their families.

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Service members may access their health care provider to understand the reproductive health care available to them, as well as Military OneSource and chaplain resources, if desired, for more information regarding additional services and support. While leaders are expected to display objectivity, compassion, and discretion when addressing all health care matters, should they be uncomfortable approving requests for non-covered reproductive health care, they may discuss with their chain of command whether they can refer such requests to a higher echelon of command for approval.

The efforts taken by the Department on reproductive health care will not only ensure Service members and their families are afforded the time and flexibility to make private health care decisions, but will also ensure Service members are able to access non-covered reproductive health care regardless of their duty station. These policies reflect and reinforce our commitment to taking care of our people and ensuring the entire force remains ready and resilient.

Thank you for your continued strong support for our Service members and their families. I am sending similar responses to the other signatories of your letter.

Sincerely,

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Gilbert R. Cisneros, Jr.



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UNDER SECRETARY OF DEFENSE
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MAR 14 2023

The Honorable Deb Fischer
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Fischer:

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MAR 14 2023

The Honorable Tom Cotton
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Cotton:

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The Honorable M. Michael Rounds
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Rounds:

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MAR 14 2023

The Honorable Joni K. Ernst
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Ernst:

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MAR 14 2023

The Honorable Thom Tillis
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Tillis:

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The Honorable Dan Sullivan
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The Honorable Kevin Cramer
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Gilbert R. Cisneros, Jr.



PERSONNEL AND
READINESS

UNDER SECRETARY OF DEFENSE
4000 DEFENSE PENTAGON
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20301-4000

MAR 14 2023

The Honorable Rick Scott
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Scott:

Thank you for your letter to the Secretary of Defense regarding his October 20, 2022 memorandum, "Ensuring Access to Reproductive Health Care," and the recent release of Department policies on Service member privacy related to pregnancy and access to reproductive health care. I am responding on the Secretary's behalf as these matters fall under my purview.

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Gilbert R. Cisneros, Jr.



PERSONNEL AND
READINESS

UNDER SECRETARY OF DEFENSE
4000 DEFENSE PENTAGON
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20301-4000

MAR 14 2023

The Honorable Marsha Blackburn
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Blackburn:

Thank you for your letter to the Secretary of Defense regarding his October 20, 2022 memorandum, "Ensuring Access to Reproductive Health Care," and the recent release of Department policies on Service member privacy related to pregnancy and access to reproductive health care. I am responding on the Secretary's behalf as these matters fall under my purview.

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PERSONNEL AND
READINESS

UNDER SECRETARY OF DEFENSE
4000 DEFENSE PENTAGON
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20301-4000

MAR 14 2023

The Honorable Josh Hawley
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Hawley:

Thank you for your letter to the Secretary of Defense regarding his October 20, 2022 memorandum, "Ensuring Access to Reproductive Health Care," and the recent release of Department policies on Service member privacy related to pregnancy and access to reproductive health care. I am responding on the Secretary's behalf as these matters fall under my purview.

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PERSONNEL AND
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UNDER SECRETARY OF DEFENSE
4000 DEFENSE PENTAGON
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20301-4000

MAR 14 2023

The Honorable Tommy Tuberville
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Tuberville:

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PERSONNEL AND
READINESS

UNDER SECRETARY OF DEFENSE
4000 DEFENSE PENTAGON
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20301-4000

MAR 14 2023

The Honorable Markwayne Mullin
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Mullin:

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PERSONNEL AND
READINESS

UNDER SECRETARY OF DEFENSE
4000 DEFENSE PENTAGON
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20301-4000

MAR 14 2023

The Honorable Ted Budd
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Budd:

Thank you for your letter to the Secretary of Defense regarding his October 20, 2022 memorandum, "Ensuring Access to Reproductive Health Care," and the recent release of Department policies on Service member privacy related to pregnancy and access to reproductive health care. I am responding on the Secretary's behalf as these matters fall under my purview.

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PERSONNEL AND
READINESS

UNDER SECRETARY OF DEFENSE
4000 DEFENSE PENTAGON
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20301-4000

MAR 14 2023

The Honorable Eric Schmitt
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Schmitt:

Thank you for your letter to the Secretary of Defense regarding his October 20, 2022 memorandum, "Ensuring Access to Reproductive Health Care," and the recent release of Department policies on Service member privacy related to pregnancy and access to reproductive health care. I am responding on the Secretary's behalf as these matters fall under my purview.

On October 20, 2022, the Secretary of Defense signed a memorandum directing additional actions to ensure Service members and their families can access reproductive health care and Department of Defense health care providers are able to operate effectively, consistent with Federal law. On February 16, 2023, the Department released policies on command notification of pregnancy, administrative absence for non-covered reproductive health care, and travel allowances for non-covered reproductive health care. These policies reinforce the Secretary of Defense's commitment to taking care of our people, protecting their health and well-being, and ensuring the force remains ready and resilient.

As of March 2023, Service members are afforded the option—similar to their civilian counterparts—of having up to 20 weeks before they are required to notify their commanders of pregnancy, except in certain circumstances in which earlier notification is necessary based upon individual circumstances of the Service member and mission requirements. This provides Service members the time and flexibility to make personal health care decisions. Service members and eligible dependents may also use an administrative absence and travel allowance to access assisted reproductive technology to help them in building a family. Approximately 130 military medical treatment facilities offer walk-in contraceptive counseling and services, including the full scope of non-surgical, same-day contraceptive methods, without a referral or appointment. Service members are also granted 12 weeks of non-chargeable, paid parental leave following the birth of a child, adoption of a minor child, or placement of a minor child for adoption or long-term foster care. Lastly, Service members and eligible dependents are given the time, space, and resources necessary to access lawfully available health care that may not be available within the local area of their duty station. However, Service members are still required to pay for non-covered reproductive health care, to include non-covered abortions and assisted reproductive technology.

Due to the nature of military service, Service members do not choose where they are stationed or assigned. The policies on administrative absence and travel allowances for non-covered reproductive health ensure access to reproductive health care irrespective of a Service member's duty station or assignment. To mitigate the impact of certain assignment locations,

Service members are authorized several allowances, benefits, and entitlements based on their geographic location. Examples of other allowances, benefits, and entitlements that Service members are authorized based on duty station or assignment location include remote and austere conditions assignment incentive pay, cold weather duty, authorization of assignment or special duty pay, continuous overseas tour travel entitlement, environmental morale leave, basic housing allowances, cost of living allowances, and dependent student travel, among others. All these policies are intended to increase the emotional and physical well-being of all Service members and their families.

The new policies will help Service members access lawfully available non-covered reproductive health care or accompany a dependent to access lawfully available non-covered reproductive health care, regardless of whether they are stationed inside or outside the United States. Non-covered reproductive health care includes lawfully available assisted reproductive technology, which includes egg retrieval, intrauterine insemination, and in vitro fertilization, and non-covered abortion. In reviewing requests for the administrative absence or travel allowances for non-covered reproductive health care policies, commanders must protect the privacy of protected health information, and such information will be restricted to personnel with a specific need to know. These new policies provide Service members an appropriate period to address personal health care matters and continue to allow for recovery from medical procedures, whether covered or non-covered.

Service members may access their health care provider to understand the reproductive health care available to them, as well as Military OneSource and chaplain resources, if desired, for more information regarding additional services and support. While leaders are expected to display objectivity, compassion, and discretion when addressing all health care matters, should they be uncomfortable approving requests for non-covered reproductive health care, they may discuss with their chain of command whether they can refer such requests to a higher echelon of command for approval.

The efforts taken by the Department on reproductive health care will not only ensure Service members and their families are afforded the time and flexibility to make private health care decisions, but will also ensure Service members are able to access non-covered reproductive health care regardless of their duty station. These policies reflect and reinforce our commitment to taking care of our people and ensuring the entire force remains ready and resilient.

Thank you for your continued strong support for our Service members and their families. I am sending similar responses to the other signatories of your letter.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Gilbert R. Cisneros, Jr.", written in a cursive style.

Gilbert R. Cisneros, Jr.