



February 10, 2021

Secretary of Defense Lloyd J. Austin III
1000 Defense Pentagon
Washington, DC 20301

Dear Secretary Austin:

The Military Coalition (TMC) represents more than 5.5 million service members, veterans, their families and survivors. We are writing to you regarding the implementation study on Dependent Care Flexible Spending Accounts (DCFSA) requested in the FY 2021 National Defense Authorization Act House report language. As the department starts work on this report, we ask you to consider the information our organizations have compiled (attached) and our strong support for implementing this child care benefit, one of many reforms needed to help alleviate child care issues for our service members.

As advocates for service members and their families, our organizations consistently hear about child care affordability and accessibility concerns at installations across the country. These issues have escalated as child care costs rise faster than inflation¹ and the number of providers decline². The COVID-19 pandemic has significantly exacerbated these trends.

Attached is a white paper developed by subject matter experts from TMC member organizations, Military Officers Association of America (MOAA) and National Military Family Association (NMFA), addressing concerns the department outlined in the 2007 implementation study on DCFSA and provides contextual evidence highlighting the need for this benefit.

Thank you for considering these comments as the department develops the implementation study. We hope you approach our organizations as a resource. We are happy to provide further assistance and address any concerns as you consider this vital policy. We appreciate your continued support of our nation's service members, veterans, their families and survivors.

Sincerely,

Jack Du Teil
President
The Military Coalition

CC: General Mark Milley, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff
Virginia Penrod, Acting Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness
Jeri Busch, Director for Military Compensation Policy

¹ Bureau of Labor Statistics, Consumer Price Index: Between 2007 and 2020, the cost of child care rose at an average rate of 2.9% per year, which is higher than the overall inflation rate of 1.71% during this same period.

² Child Care Aware of America, 2019 Picking up the Pieces Report: Results show 53% of states reported a decline in the number of child care centers between 2018 and 2019. 79% of states reported a decline in family child care (FCC) providers.

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 Army (AUSA)
Association of the United States Navy (AUSN)
Chief Warrants & Warrant Officers Assoc. of the U.S. Coast Guard (CWOAUSCG)
Commissioned Officers Association of the U.S. Public Health Service (COAUSPHS)
Fleet Reserve Association (FRA)
Gold Star Wives of America (GSW)
Iraq and Afghanistan Veterans of America (IAVA)
Jewish War Veterans of the United States of America (JWV)
Marine Corps League (MCL)
Marine Corps Reserve Association (MCRA)
Military Chaplains Association of the United States of America (MCA)
Military Officers Association of America (MOAA)
Military Order of the Purple Heart (MOPH)
National Military Family Association (NMFA)
Naval Enlisted Reserve Association (NERA)
Non Commissioned Officers Association (NCOA)
Reserve Officers Association (ROA)
Service Women's Action Network (SWAN)
The Independence Fund (TIF)
Tragedy Assistance Program for Survivors (TAPS)
United States Army Warrant Officers Association (USAWOA)
Vets First
Wounded Warrior Project (WWP)