

# Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20510

November 21, 2019

The Honorable Mark T. Esper  
Secretary  
U.S. Department of Defense  
1000 Defense Pentagon  
Washington, D.C. 20301-1000

Dear Secretary Esper:

We write to express our profound objection to proposed cuts to the budget of the Uniformed Services University of the Health Sciences (USU) presented to you as part of the Defense-Wide Review.

USU is the nation's federal school of medicine and graduate school of nursing. The university educates health care professionals dedicated to career service in the Department of Defense and the U.S. Public Health Service. USU is the single largest accession source to military medicine: 25% of medical corps officers are USU graduates.

As our Armed Forces are being deployed into combat zones, USU graduates provide combat casualty care for our troops around the globe. They provide care aboard ships and airplanes equipped as state-of-the-art hospitals, and in emergency rooms and public health facilities throughout our nation. These outstanding women and men are educated at USU in medicine, graduate nursing and biomedical research.

In addition to its world-class educational programs, the University is dedicated to innovative research in military medicine and nursing as well as public health. Its research programs, devoted to preventive medicine, infectious disease, traumatic brain injury and post-traumatic stress disorder, are relevant both locally and globally.

USU graduates serve on active duty longer, deploy longer, are more represented in special operations units, attain a higher percentage of specialty board certifications, attend more operationally-relevant training courses, and have longer careers and more promotions than their peers from other accession sources. The cost to the military for a USU graduate per year of practice is comparable to graduates from Health Professional Scholarship Program (HPSP) schools. Accession cost per day deployed and total career cost per day deployed for USU graduates is half of the cost for HPSP graduates.

Our nation is fortunate that the University fulfills its mission of educating future generations of military and public health physicians, nurses and biomedical scientists. USU is a compelling example of the importance of public investment in our nation's future. It is imperative that the Administration and Congress continue to provide the critical assistance needed to USU so that it can continue to carry out these objectives.

Given the USU's track record of excellence, we were alarmed to learn that the Department is considering cuts as high as 30% to the University's budget for research, development, testing, and evaluation (RDT&E) and 34% to University operations and maintenance (O&M). The options recommended to the Secretary also reportedly include the cancellation of a \$445 million military construction project and closure of the USU Medical School, which would likely precipitate closure of the University. There is also a proposal to close down the USU entirely.

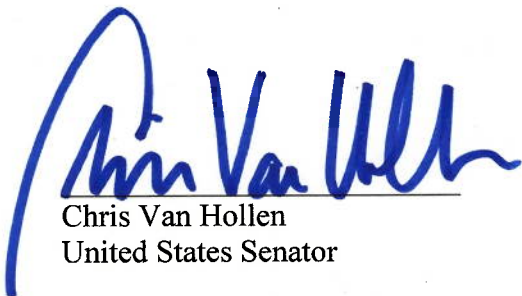
These cuts, even if only partially implemented or scaled back, will adversely impact the enterprise across recruitment, retention, access to research funding, and severely impact medical readiness at a time when demand is increasing.

We are also concerned by the manner in which these cuts have been planned and proposed. As you are likely aware, the Senate Appropriations Committee in its FY 2020 Department of Defense Appropriations Bill report cautioned the Department that "[c]ontinued, wide-ranging truncation or elimination of programs without notification to the congressional defense committees in advance of the subsequent budget submission leads to inefficiencies and misappropriation of resources in the current budget request being considered."

Senior level budget reviews from the Office of the Secretary of Defense place Congress in a position of appropriating resources to programs that will be truncated or eliminated in the following year's budget request. For this reason, the Committee specifically directed the Department to provide documentation highlighting all truncations and eliminations resulting from senior level "Night Courts."

The Department's budget review process directly affects our ability to fulfill our constitutional obligations of authorizing and appropriating for the activities of the Department. We urge you to reject these ill-conceived cuts to the Uniformed Services University of the Health Sciences and ensure that the Department is more transparent with its budgeting decisions in the future.

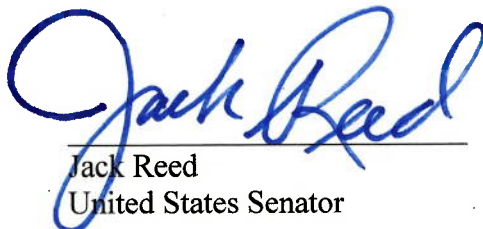
Sincerely,



Chris Van Hollen  
United States Senator



Benjamin L. Cardin  
United States Senator



Jack Reed  
United States Senator



Jamie Raskin  
Member of Congress