

Congress of the United States  
House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515-3102

July 19, 2023

The Honorable Chuck Schumer  
Senate Majority Leader  
U.S. Senate  
322 Hart Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Mitch McConnell  
Senate Minority Leader  
U.S. Senate  
317 Russell Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Jack Reed  
Chairman  
Senate Armed Services Committee  
728 Hart Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Roger Wicker  
Ranking Member  
Senate Armed Services Committee  
425 Russell Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Majority Leader Schumer, Minority Leader McConnell, Chairman Reed, and Ranking Member Wicker:

I write to you to urge the Senate to pass a National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) that protects access to reproductive services and gender-affirming health care for America's service members and supports our diverse military. Specifically, I urge the Senate to remove the anti-choice and discriminatory provisions from the House-passed NDAA bill.

For 62 consecutive years, Congress has passed an NDAA in a bipartisan and bicameral fashion that has been signed into law by the President. Regardless of who occupied the White House or which party was in control of Congress, passing the NDAA was a testament to the essential work of supporting America's national defense. The House bill includes the largest increase in pay and benefits for service members in a decade, protections for clean air and water on military installations, increases in childcare programs at installations such as Holloman Air Force Base, and support for key missions that provide quality jobs in rural states, including those in New Mexico.

Unfortunately, extreme anti-choice and discriminatory provisions were inserted in the bill at the eleventh hour that strip access to abortion services, eliminate gender-affirming care for transgender individuals, and prevent the Department of Defense (DOD) from supporting a diverse military that represents the makeup of our country. These amendments negatively impact the lives of our service members who need these services and detract from our national security.

Reproductive care *is* health care. At a time when states are limiting access to abortion services, we must ensure our service members are able to access reproductive care regardless of where they are stationed. Our trans service members are equally deserving of quality care – amid constant attacks to the LGBTQ+ community's basic rights, these discriminatory amendments must be removed. Restricting any of our service members' access to essential health care is a disservice to them and their commitment to our country.

At a time when America's armed forces are facing historic recruitment and retention challenges, we should be doing more, not less, to make the military a more welcoming and attractive career path for our nation's youth.

I strongly urge my Senate colleagues on both sides of the aisle to strip out these provisions, and instead, protect access to reproductive services, access to gender-affirming care, and programs that support a strong and diverse military. We must ensure that America's service members can seek the essential health care services that they've earned and deserve, and that America's fighting force is reflective of, and values, the diversity that makes the United States the best country in the world. It is crucial to ensure these dangerous amendments are not included in the final version of this must-pass legislation.

I appreciate your attention to this matter.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Gabe Vasquez', with a stylized flourish extending to the right.

Gabe Vasquez  
Member of Congress