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United States Senate

COMMITTEE ON ARMED SERVICES

WASHINGTON, DC 20510-6050

ELIZABETH L. KING, STAFF DIRECTOR
JOHN P. KEAST, REPUBLICAN STAFF DIRECTOR

March 25, 2024

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

Dear Secretary Austin,

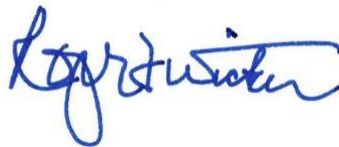
I have sent letters on March 1, 2023, September 15, 2023, and October 27, 2023 asking for information that justifies the Department of Defense abortion travel policy, only to be given incomplete, evasive, or outright non-answers to the questions asked. Your focus in your previous letter of December 20, 2023, on fertilization services and other women's health issues that do not concern abortion are not the source of my questions. My true concern is the provision of non-covered abortion services that end the lives of unborn babies. In future letters, please focus your responses on this issue.

In a letter sent to members of this committee dated December 20, 2023, you told the members that "The first report on the cost and usage of these policies is due in January 2024 and will include data through December 31, 2023." At the time of this writing, our committee has indirectly received data from the Army stating that between August 2023 and December 31, 2023, three service members utilized the policy and claimed travel expenses totaling \$2,097." This information was received indirectly through a different Senate committee. Please consider this letter another request from the Senate Armed Services Committee for the immediate delivery of all available data across the Department of Defense on the utilization of this policy.

Additionally, in the same response on December 20, 2023, you said, "To protect the privacy of service members, we will not keep track of the number of individuals who use the policy. Rather, we will keep track of the number of instances of travel, associated costs, and administrative absences." This statement is contradicted by the Army's data which clearly provided the number of service members who have claimed reimbursement of travel expenses using the policy. I acknowledge that this issue requires discretion due to medical data of individuals, but discretion would not necessitate the refusal to track the number of persons who use the policy. That number is essential to best capture the actual readiness impact on the force, if any. I request the Department of Defense provide the number of service members across the Department who have used this policy, in the same form the Army has provided, since its implementation. To ensure privacy in this matter, the data should be Department of Defense-wide, anonymous, and aggregated to safeguard the privacy of service members.

Finally, I reiterate that you must provide comprehensive answers to each of my previous questions, such as the use of this policy to facilitate late-term abortions, which we addressed in a letter we sent to you in September of 2023. In addition to this, please provide evidence and substantive data to support the claim that the *Dobbs v. Jackson Women's Health Organization* would have "significant implications" for the "readiness of the Force." It is imperative that you answer these questions directly and promptly so that this committee can effectively legislate on this matter.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Roger F. Wicker". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Roger" being the most prominent part.

Roger F. Wicker
Ranking Member