

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510-3205

April 28, 2025

The Honorable Pete Hegseth
Secretary of Defense
Department of Defense
1000 Defense Pentagon
Washington, D.C. 20301

Dear Secretary Hegseth,

Over the last week, our offices received multiple reports of pending Department of Defense guidance that would significantly alter, or even terminate, large portions of the Department's sexual assault prevention and response (SAPR) services. According to these reports, SAPR guidelines are included in a list recently circulated by Deputy Secretary Feinberg for review and potential cancellation. As staunch advocates for improving SAPR efforts, to include the historic and bipartisan reforms to military justice, we are writing to express our deep concern with the mere possibility of significant alterations or termination of SAPR regulations. There can be no ambiguity in the Department's position on ending sexual misconduct across the services, and any lack of clarity risks casting a chilling effect across the services.

This topic arose during your confirmation process, and we agree with your Advanced Policy Questions (APQ) response to the Senate Armed Services Committee that "the Department must do better to train and ingrain the fact that sexual abuse and assault is not tolerated in the force." Meaningful progress toward this goal is fundamentally incompatible with any effort to dismantle those SAPR-related programs and regulations that are already in place. Even minor reductions risk compromising decades of progress toward ending sexual abuse and harassment in the Department. Prompt action is essential to reinforcing victims' belief in the words of their leadership.

As you have stated, "[e]very servicemember deserves the opportunity to serve their nation without fear of harassment or assault." Yet this "fear" inevitably takes hold in environments where victims do not feel protected from their abusers or supported by their leadership. Thus, we request immediate action to eliminate any ambiguity and clarify the Department of Defense's position. Consistent with your previous commitment to "ensuring high-level focus on this issue," we encourage you to make public assurances that victims of sexual misconduct will be supported, that offenders will be held accountable, and that no changes will be made to reduce the Department's SAPR services. The readiness of our forces and the security of our nation depend on a swift and unequivocal response.

Sincerely,



Kirsten Gillibrand
United States Senator



Lisa Murkowski
United States Senator

cc:

Mr. Jules Hurst, Performing the Duties of Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness

The Honorable Daniel Driscoll, Secretary, Department of the Army

The Honorable John Phelan, Secretary, Department of the Navy

The Honorable Gary Ashworth, Acting Secretary, Department of the Air Force