

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

December 18, 2019

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

Dear Secretary Esper:

We are writing to urge the Department of Defense (DoD) to expeditiously implement provisions of the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2020 (FY20 NDAA) regarding military family housing and request a briefing on current DoD initiatives to alleviate military housing issues. For the past year, service members across the country, including those in Texas, have suffered from unsafe living conditions, substandard maintenance, and, in select cases, retaliation for filing complaints about their on-post privatized housing. The readiness of our service members stems directly from the ability to support their family members. We are concerned that substandard housing detracts from the training and preparation necessary to ensure our soldiers, sailors, airmen, and marines remain ready to execute any given mission necessary for the defense of our country.

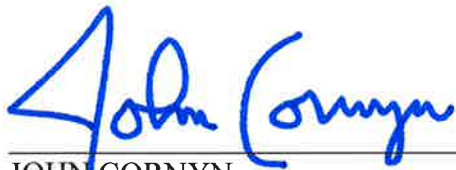
In 1996, DoD established the Military Housing Privatization Initiative to improve dire housing conditions for service members by allowing private companies to administer family housing on military bases. Recently, reports from service members have highlighted unacceptable issues in privatized on-post housing ranging from mold to lead contamination. Furthermore, many service members report that maintenance services are unresponsive and inadequate. Maintenance personnel allegedly routinely close out work orders without remediating the problem, forcing families to submit multiple work orders for a single maintenance issue.

Over the past year, our offices have engaged in multiple discussions with service component leadership, met with installation leadership, and discussed directly with service members to ensure that this issue is addressed expeditiously. Additionally, the FY20 NDAA implements the most substantial overhaul of the Privatized Military Housing initiative since its creation in 1996. It requires the services to establish a tenant bill of rights, a standardized assessment tool for evaluating military housing risks such as lead and mold, and a dispute resolution process which allows the withholding of Basic Allowance for Housing until the dispute is resolved. While we believe these provisions are a step in the right direction, there is ultimately no replacement for engaged military leadership, both now and moving forward as the services begin implementation of these provisions.

Representing over a dozen military installations in Texas that provide for the nation's defense, we believe it is critical that DoD ensures service members and their families have access to

quality housing. It is unacceptable that our service members have to worry about the safety of their families in on-post or off-post housing. We therefore request a briefing regarding the DoD's plans for implementing housing provisions included in the FY20 NDAA and current initiatives to address identified shortcomings at bases such as Joint Base San Antonio and Ft. Hood. Thank you for your leadership and attention to this issue.

Sincerely,



JOHN CORNYN
United States Senator



TED CRUZ
United States Senator

CC: Assistant Secretary of the Air Force John W. Henderson (Installations, Environment and Energy)
Assistant Secretary of the Army Alex A. Beehler (Installations, Energy and Environment)