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United States Senate

COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS

WASHINGTON, DC 20510-6025

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July 28, 2017

The Honorable James Mattis
Secretary of Defense
1000 Defense Pentagon
Washington, DC 20310

Dear Secretary Mattis:

Last month, you announced your approval of a recommendation by the military services to defer accepting transgender applicants into the military until January 1, 2018. While I had concerns at the time of your announcement, I expected you to carry out a thoughtful and deliberative process that would include consultations with Congress. On Wednesday, however, the President tweeted that “the United States Government will not accept or allow transgender individuals to serve in any capacity in the U.S. Military.”

The President’s tweet is not only a reversal of the policy announced last year, but it would also equate to a ban on transgender individuals, even those who are now serving in the military. This draconian approach to the thousands of transgender individuals who are both willing and qualified to serve is not consistent with the values of our country and is not consistent with the values we expect of our service members in their conduct. As you know, I share your commitment to order, discipline, and an egalitarian ethos where anyone who can meet the standards is a welcome member of the team. I am especially concerned that this decision has all of the characteristics of a rushed political decision.

Your announcement last month suggested that services would review their accession plans and provide input on the impact to the readiness and lethality of our forces. To my knowledge, this review has not been completed, but the President’s tweet suggests that he received the advice of military leaders and experts.

I request that you provide me with the revised service accession plans, an explanation of the policy with respect to current members of the armed forces, and all documents, memorandum, analysis, presentations, reports, and communications related to the White House’s consultation with the Department of Defense regarding this decision no later than July 31, 2017.

I look forward to your reply.

Sincerely,


Richard J. Durbin
Vice Chairman