United States Senate
COMMITTEE ON ARMED SERVICES
WASHINGTON, DC 20510–6050

September 15, 2023

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

Dear Secretary Austin:

I request information on the use of the abortion policies concerning reimbursed travel and authorized absence that your department implemented in February 2023. I received information that the total number of women who have been granted administrative absence and reimbursed travel pursuant to this policy is approximately 12.

Can you please confirm whether this information is correct? If not, please provide me the number of women who have been granted administrative absence and reimbursed travel pursuant to the policy.

Additionally, I request information on the potential use of this policy to facilitate late-term abortions. Through a plain reading of the policy, it appears that an eligible woman in the eighth month of her pregnancy could travel at the expense of the Department of Defense from a state such as Mississippi to obtain an abortion in a state such as Oregon, where abortion is legal at all stages of pregnancy.

Is this interpretation correct? If not, please clarify how I have misinterpreted the policy.

Finally, in our letters dated July 17, 2022, November 21, 2022, and March 1, 2023, my Republican colleagues and I asked you for evidence to support the Department of Defense's claim in a June 28, 2022, memorandum that the Supreme Court decision in *Dobbs v. Jackson Women's Health Organization* would have "significant implications" for the "readiness of the Force." To date, we have yet to receive any substantive data to support these assertions. I now ask again for the specific data that leads the Department of Defense to make the above claim.

As I have previously stated, the United States is at a pivotal moment for national defense, and there is no time for distractions. When the Department of Defense becomes sidetracked by divisive political sideshows, the missions of deterrence and readiness are the first to suffer. The Department of Defense's focus should always be our national defense, not on circumventing Federal law to facilitate abortions. I ask you to rescind these policies immediately.

Sincerely,

Roger F. Wicker