



ASSOCIATION OF THE UNITED STATES ARMY

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March 8, 2021

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

Dear Secretary Austin:

The Association of the United States Army (AUSA) serves to advocate in support of the Total Army – Regular, National Guard and Reserve – Army families, Army civilians, and those who have served. One of the greatest concerns of our membership is the quality of healthcare. As the Department of Defense works to complete the FY 2022 budget request, I ask that the following four recommendations to help maintain, protect and improve the military health system (MHS) and support combat readiness for the Armed Forces be considered:

- As the nation makes progress fighting the COVID-19 pandemic, comprehensively reassess the planned reductions to military medical positions and the consolidation of military treatment facilities to make sure quality and availability of healthcare services is not reduced, made more complicated, or made more expensive for service members and their families.
- Carefully consider the strategic value of the Uniformed Services University of Health Sciences (USUHS) to the nation and DoD with the intent to maintain if not grow resourcing for this institution that has proved so capable and important to medical readiness.
- Refrain from adding additional cost increases on top of the ongoing cost increases to TRICARE for retirees, particularly in light of the many hardships caused by the COVID-19 pandemic.
- Consider providing TRICARE to our National Guard and Reserve service members and their families on an annual basis to improve combat readiness of the total force. We firmly believe that by providing this needed healthcare on an annual basis, the resulting improvements to readiness, training and time management, morale, recruiting, and retention will more than offset the additional cost over the longer term. Additionally, the impact on our small business employers who often struggle to hire and retain National Guard and Reserve, will be quite positive.

Thank you for considering these concerns and recommendations which are all intended to ultimately support national security and our Armed Forces. If I or AUSA can be of any assistance to you and your staff, please do not hesitate to contact me at cham@ausa.org or my Government Affairs director, Mark Haaland at mhaaland@ausa.org.

Sincerely,

Carter F. Ham
General, U.S. Army Retired
President & CEO