



Congress of the United States House of Representatives

April 2, 2020

Dr. Mark T. Esper
Secretary of Defense
1000 Defense Pentagon
Washington, DC 20301

Secretary Esper,

We applaud the Defense Department enacting the March 11, 2020 Stop Movement Order, which prevents DoD civilian employees, Servicemembers and their families from traveling and potentially worsening the spread of the 2019 Novel Coronavirus (COVID-19). Not only does this action preserve the health and welfare of DoD civilian employees, Servicemembers and their families, but it also increases positive outcomes for local communities and ensures our force readiness is sustained.

While the Stop Movement order was noble and necessary, this unprecedented action left thousands of military families in extreme financial distress. Shortly after the 60-day movement suspension was ordered, numerous military members and their families informed us of the significant repercussions caused by their inability to follow through with their PCS, retirement and/or separation orders. Their specific circumstances include but are not limited to families who are renting a home at their current duty station and have contractually purchased or leased a rental unit at their next duty station, families who are currently renting with landlords who refuse to release deposits towards rental property at the new duty location, civilian spouses who terminated their employment prior to the Stop Movement order, and families who will be forced to separate due to their civilian spouses employment at the new duty station. These circumstances have forced Servicemembers and their families into difficult financial situations where they are paying for two residences and must replace necessities that were already shipped, ie- household goods, rental furniture, and clothing.

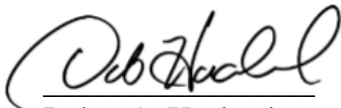
We understand there are mechanisms within each respective Service that assist military families with resources and monetary support like grants and loans, but the monetary caps under these programs are simply not high enough in this situation. For example, under current policy, Army families are limited to a maximum of \$1,500 to offset their expenses while they wait to PCS. Additionally, given the scope of the problem, we are concerned about the limited capacity installation Commanders and organizations like the Airmen and Family Readiness Centers have to address these claims. This unparalleled order issued to save lives has led to an unparalleled

need for assistance, critically straining the staff and resources available and inevitably resulting in long delays before relief reaches military families.

We strongly urge you to show the same level of swift action you did in issuing the Stop Movement Order to exercise every measure within your authority to provide the Services with the guidance and resources needed to ensure care and support to every military member and family adversely affected by this order. Further, we strongly urge you to issue guidance allowing Commanders to use the greatest possible breadth of relief options for these families and to further empower commanders to coordinate with traditional and non-traditional partners that may rapidly address the needs of these families, including coordination between gaining and losing Installations, Military Family Support organizations, national and community non-profits, veterans service organizations, non-Government Organizations, State and Local Governments, existing community support efforts, and any and all available relief funds.

We remain eager to assist you in this effort and encourage you to request any additional resources or authorities you may require to provide for the wellbeing of military families directly affected by this order. Again, thank you and your team for the COVID-19 responses you've put in place thus far. Let's continue to serve this community, as they serve our nation, with the utmost respect and care.

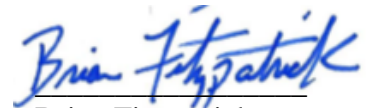
Sincerely,



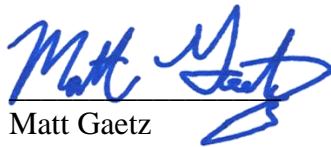
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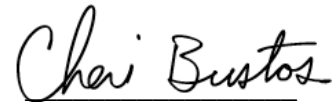
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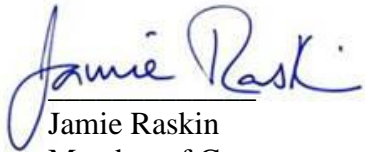
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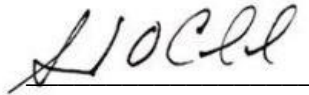
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