

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

April 21, 2023

Hon. Lloyd Austin
Secretary of Defense
U.S. Department of Defense
Washington, DC 20301

Dear Secretary Austin,

We write to express deep concern over the lack of access to medical care at military treatment facilities (MTFs) in Japan caused by implementation of Defense Health Agency (DHA) Procedural Instruction 6025.11 of October 18, 2018. We are asking the Department of Defense (DoD) to take immediate action to provide access to standard primary and emergency care for all active duty servicemembers and their dependents, civilians, and contractors stationed in the country.

Civilians and contractors perform vital services for the United States' mission to protect our national security and interests overseas. They and their families deserve access to adequate medical care, provided by the DoD, that corresponds to the level of care to which they are accustomed. Unfortunately, there is limited access to emergency care or standard specialty care for the more than 100,000 Americans serving on military bases in Japan. Access for the 10,000 civilians stationed there is particularly difficult, and tragically there have been several preventable deaths because many MTFs in INDO-PACOM are not designated trauma care centers. This has often forced civilians and active duty servicemembers alike to seek emergency treatment elsewhere.

A failure by the DoD to provide quality medical care to all U.S. personnel in Japan will threaten the ability of the United States to carry out our mission successfully. While we appreciate the memorandum sent by DHA on March 3, 2023, stating that civilians with chronic conditions must be treated at MTFs on a space-available basis, it does not go far enough to address the systemic issues impacting our civilian workforce in Japan. Current DHA policy still requires thousands of non-military patients to compete for a handful of same-day appointments. To remedy this, DHA or an adjacent agency must have a funded mandate to ensure non-active-duty U.S. personnel have access to U.S. standards of healthcare.

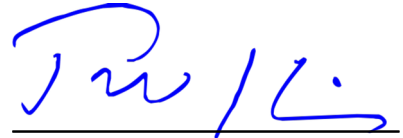
The issue cannot be solved by simply providing translation services and additional insurance options for non-active-duty military patients in Japan. If guaranteed access to primary and emergency care is not made available to all Total Force patients by the DoD, civilian personnel will be forced to leave Japan. The very real possibility of a mass exodus of civilians would severely weaken military operations at a time when tensions are rising in a strategic region. Military bases in Japan cannot function without our civilian employees, including nuclear engineers, teachers, law enforcement, cleared positions, logistics specialists, medical staff, and thousands of other personnel.

We are asking you to detail the Department's plan to ensure guaranteed access to U.S. standard primary and emergency care for all active duty servicemembers, civilians, contractors, and their dependents stationed in Japan. We appreciate your consideration of this request and look forward to your timely reply.

Sincerely,



Frank Pallone, Jr.
Member of Congress



Tim Kaine
United States Senator



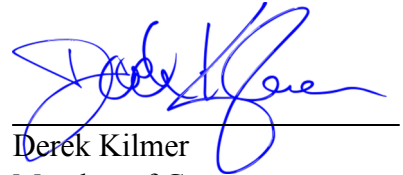
Elizabeth Warren
United States Senator



Marie Gluesenkamp Perez
Member of Congress



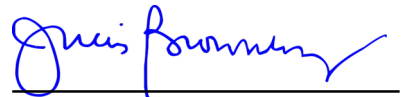
Ed Case
Member of Congress



Derek Kilmer
Member of Congress



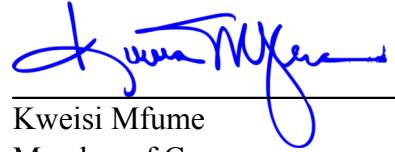
Jim Tokuda
Member of Congress



Julia Brownley
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Mark DeSaulnier
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Kweisi Mfume
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David J. Trone
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