

**Congress of the United States**  
**Washington, DC 20515**

June 30, 2021

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

Dear Secretary Austin:

We write to you in light of reports that the Pentagon is in the process of disbanding the Defense Advisory Committee on Women in the Services (DACOWITS). We are concerned that this move will harm women in the Armed Forces by eliminating an important advocacy component.

As you know, DACOWITS has a long history in crafting and implementing policies “relating to the recruitment, retention, employment, integration, well-being, and treatment of servicewomen in the Armed Forces.” The committee has submitted more than 1,000 recommendations in its 70-year history to a generation of your predecessors, and roughly 97 percent of those recommendations have been fully or partially adopted. More important is what that number signifies: the evolving integration of women into all military branches and jobs.

We are the faces of what DACOWITS has meant for women in the military. As women veterans in Congress, we know the value of expanding opportunities within the services for women and the value that, in turn, has brought to our Armed Forces. Eliminating DACOWITS or subsuming it within another organization is contrary to its intent, history, and success. We do not believe its work is complete, as evidenced by so many issues we are currently addressing as a nation and a military. And we believe that this work is substantial enough to require a dedicated organization; including DACOWITS’s issues in the charter of a broader organization will not provide sufficient resources or focus to achieve the results that are necessary. It would send the wrong message to every woman currently serving in the military or to those who have worn our nation’s uniform and sacrificed. We believe we can tackle diversity, equity, and inclusion without disbanding one of the military’s most effective tools to advance women.

Therefore, we therefore strongly oppose the elimination or restructuring of DACOWITS and respectfully request that it be fully restored to its historic role.

Sincerely,



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Elaine G. Luria  
Member of Congress



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Joni Ernst  
U.S. Senator



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Mariannette Miller-Meeks, M.D.  
Member of Congress



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Tammy Duckworth  
U.S. Senator



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Chrissy Houlahan  
Member of Congress



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Mikie Sherrill  
Member of Congress