

# United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

April 1, 2019

The Honorable James Inhofe  
Chairman  
Senate Committee on Armed Services  
Russell Senate Building, Room 228

The Honorable Jack Reed  
Ranking Member  
Senate Committee on Armed Services  
Russell Senate Building, Room 228

Dear Chairman Inhofe and Ranking Member Reed:

We write today to request that the Armed Services Committee include provisions of our legislation, entitled the *Ensuring Safe Housing for our Military Act*, to improve privatized military housing, in the Fiscal Year 2020 National Defense Authorization Act.

As you know, major problems with privatized military housing have surfaced since *Reuters* first published a series of articles last year. The *Reuters* articles, and hearings held by your committee, have revealed that many servicemembers and their families have been forced to live in homes with serious health, safety and environmental hazards, without sufficient recourse.

The contractors who operate privatized military housing have too often failed to properly remedy these hazards, or outright ignored servicemembers' concerns. The military housing officials and installation commanders responsible for ensuring that our servicemembers have safe housing have frequently fallen well short of their charge.

While we are pleased that the military services have realized the scope and severity of the problem, and have begun to circulate a "Resident Bill of Rights" for servicemembers living in privatized housing, we strongly believe that Congress must enact legal protections for our military families and strengthen accountability mechanisms for these private companies.

To that end, our bill would:

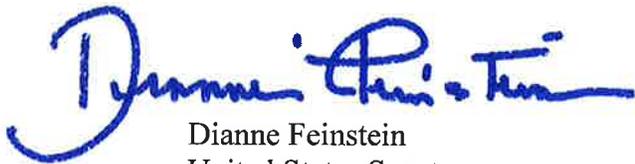
- 1) Require installation commanders to withhold payment of a servicemember's basic allowance for housing (BAH) until a military housing official has inspected an environmental, safety or health hazard, verified that appropriate remediation has taken place, and the servicemember concurs that the remediation is satisfactory. In the case that the hazard requires the servicemember to leave the housing unit, the contractor will pay all relocation costs.
- 2) Prohibit payment of a deposit, and any fee or penalty related to ending a lease early, except for normal wear and tear. The bill also requires contractors to reimburse servicemembers for damage to their private property caused by a hazard.
- 3) Require the Secretary of Defense to withhold incentive fees to any contractor who persistently fails to remedy hazards.

- 4) Create standard credentials for health, safety and environmental inspectors across the services, and including contractors, to ensure consistent inspection practices.
- 5) Require the DOD to establish an electronic system so that installation commanders and servicemembers can track and oversee work orders.

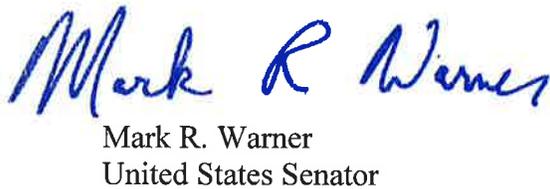
We believe these reforms are necessary to ensure that contractors are responsive to servicemembers' concerns, that military housing officials are exercising proper oversight, that servicemembers are empowered to leave any home they feel is unsafe for their family without fear of incurring a financial penalty, and, most importantly, for servicemembers and their families to live in safe and secure housing.

We thank you for your leadership and we look forward to continuing to work on this vitally important issue.

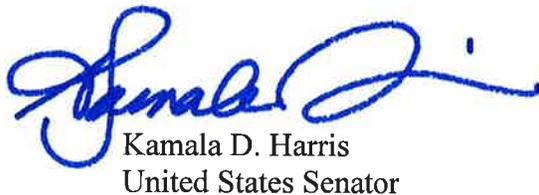
Sincerely,



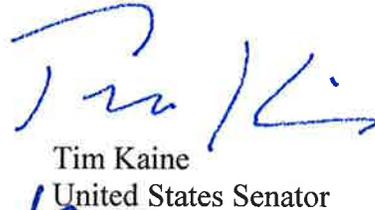
Dianne Feinstein  
United States Senator



Mark R. Warner  
United States Senator



Kamala D. Harris  
United States Senator



Tim Kaine  
United States Senator



Richard Blumenthal  
United States Senator



Chris Murphy  
United States Senator



Jeanne Shaheen  
United States Senator



Jeffrey A. Merkley  
United States Senator



Chris Van Hollen  
United States Senator



Jon Tester  
United States Senator