

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20510

August 1, 2019

Mr. Thomas McCaffery
Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary
of Defense for Health Affairs
U.S. Department of Defense
7700 Arlington Boulevard
Suite 5101
Falls Church, VA 22042-5101

Dear Mr. McCaffery:

We write today to request information from the Department of Defense (DOD) on its efforts to track and reduce the prevalence of gambling disorder among our nation's servicemembers. Specifically, we request an update on the Department's efforts to implement 2017 Government Accountability Office (GAO) recommendations related to DOD guidance documents on addictive disorders, as well as the implementation of the 2018 National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) requirement to track gambling disorder in DOD health assessments.

The Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM-5) defines gambling disorder as "persistent and recurrent problematic gambling behavior leading to clinically significant impairment or distress."¹ Gambling disorder is a public health concern similar to other addictive disorders and is correlated with an increased incidence of suicide attempts, substance use disorders, and other behavioral health conditions.² An estimated 56,000 active duty servicemembers meet criteria for gambling disorder, and research indicates that veterans' rates of gambling problems are more than twice those of the general population.³ The prevalence of gambling disorder in the military poses serious health, financial, and legal problems for affected servicemembers, and also presents national security concerns by harming individual readiness and performance and increasing affected servicemembers' susceptibility to blackmail and other malign influence.⁴

¹ "DSM-5 Diagnostic Criteria: Gambling Disorder" (accessed via the National Council on Problem Gambling), <https://www.ncpgambling.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/08/DSM-5-Diagnostic-Criteria-Gambling-Disorder.pdf>.

² American Psychiatric Association, "What is Gambling Disorder?" <https://www.psychiatry.org/patients-families/gambling-disorder/what-is-gambling-disorder>;

³ National Council on Problem Gambling, "Gambling Addiction in Military," February 2017, <http://www.ncpgambling.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/04/GAO-Report-Talking-Points-v4.pdf>; American Journal on Addictions, "Pathological and problem gambling among veterans in clinical care: prevalence, demography, and clinical correlates," J. Westermeyer, J. Carnive, P. Thuras and M. Spring, April 25, 2013, <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/23617862>.

⁴ U.S. Government Accountability Office, "DOD and the Coast Guard Need to Screen for Gambling Disorder Addiction and Update Guidance," Jan. 30, 2017, <https://www.gao.gov/products/GAO-17-114> .

In recent years, the DOD has been tasked with addressing the serious and pervasive problem of gambling addiction among servicemembers. The National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2016 required the GAO to review gambling among members of the Armed Forces. The GAO report, “Military Personnel: DOD and the Coast Guard Need to Screen for Gambling Addiction and Update Guidance,” was released in 2017.⁵ The report found that the DOD currently has 3,141 slot machines on overseas U.S. military installations. Despite these slot machines generating approximately \$100 million per year for the Department between fiscal years 2011 and 2015, the DOD does not systemically screen military personnel for gambling disorder.⁶ The GAO report recommended that the Secretary of Defense take multiple executive actions to improve its response to gambling disorder. DOD concurred with five of these recommendations, including that DOD update military service policies to explicitly address gambling disorder in behavioral health guidance documents.⁷

In addition to updating guidance documents, the GAO recommended that the DOD “incorporate medical screening questions specific to gambling disorder as part of a systematic screening process.”⁸ DOD, however, disagreed with this recommendation. In response, Congress included a provision in the Fiscal Year 2019 National Defense Authorization Act (FY19 NDAA) requiring DOD to “incorporate medical screening questions specific to gambling disorder into” certain annual health assessments “during the one-year period” after the enactment of the FY19 NDAA.⁹

We remain committed to ensuring that servicemembers and veterans suffering from gambling addiction get the help they need and deserve. We therefore request an update in writing on DOD’s progress toward implementing GAO’s recommendations and the FY19 NDAA requirements, as well as any new DOD policies and programs aimed at preventing and treating gambling problems within the military community. Please respond to the following questions by no later than August 15, 2019:

1. As outlined in the 2017 report, the GAO recommended that DOD to update substance use regulations to explicitly include gambling disorder as defined in the 2013 Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders. The Marine Corps,¹⁰ the Air Force,¹¹ and the Coast Guard¹² each updated their substance abuse guidance documents last year. What is

⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶ *Id.* pp 31.

⁷ *Id.* pp 26-27.

⁸ *Id.* pp 25.

⁹ PL 115-232.

¹⁰ U.S. Department of the Navy, Marine Corps Order 5300.17, *Marine Corps Substance Abuse Program*, June 25, 2018, <https://www.marines.mil/Portals/59/Publications/MCO%205300.17A.pdf?ver=2018-07-05-092243-130>.

¹¹ U.S. Department of the Air Force, Air Force Instruction 44-121 *Alcohol and Drug Abuse Prevention and Treatment (ADAPT) Program*, July 18, 2018, https://static.e-publishing.af.mil/production/1/af_sg/publication/afi44-121/afi44-121.pdf.

¹² Commandant Instruction M1000.10., *Coast Guard Drug and Alcohol Abuse Program*, June 2018, https://media.defense.gov/2018/Sep/06/2001962318/-1/-1/0/CIM_1000_10A.PDF.

the status and timeline of updating each of the remaining regulations and policies (listed below)? What is the reason for their delayed implementation?

- a. DOD Instruction 1010.14, *Problematic Substance Use by DOD Personnel*,
 - b. Army Regulation 600-85, *The Army Substance Abuse Program*, and
 - c. Naval Operations Instruction 5350.4D, *Navy Alcohol and Drug Abuse Prevention and Control*.
2. As required by Section 733 of the FY 2019 NDAA, the DOD must include gambling disorder screening questions in health assessments for members of the Armed Forces and related research efforts, including the Annual Periodic Health Assessments, Health Related Behaviors Survey of Active Duty Military Personnel, and Health Related Behaviors Survey of Reserve Component Personnel. What is the status and timeline of DOD inclusion of questions on gambling disorder in:
- a. The Annual Periodic Health Assessments of Members of the Armed Forces,
 - b. The Health Related Behaviors Survey of Active Duty Military Personnel, and
 - c. The Health Related Behaviors Survey of Reserve Component Personnel?
3. If drafted or implemented, please provide copies of the questions and survey results related to gambling disorder in each of the following as applicable:
- a. The Annual Periodic Health Assessments of Members of the Armed Forces,
 - b. The Health Related Behaviors Survey of Active Duty Military Personnel, and
 - c. The Health Related Behaviors Survey of Reserve Component Personnel.
4. Senator Warren submitted several Questions for the Record (QFRs) related to gambling disorder at your confirmation hearing before the Senate Armed Services Committee on November 29, 2018. In response to a question related to slot machines on overseas military bases, you noted your intention to discuss the implications of continuing to allow slot machines abroad.¹³ Since the confirmation hearing, have there been any discussions related to DOD's current policy (DoD Instruction 1015.10), which currently allows slot machines in locations outside the United States? If so, please describe the nature of these discussions.
5. In another answer to Senator Warren's QFRs, you indicated that gambling disorder was added to the Addictive Substance Misuse Advisory Committee (ASMAC) portfolio, which is "a joint committee between Health Affairs and DOD Components to address both prevention and treatment of these problems."¹⁴ What work has ASMAC done to address gambling disorder in the military?

¹³ Thomas McCaffery Questions for the Record Answers for Senator Elizabeth Warren, November 29, 2018. "Currently DoD Instruction 1015.10, "Military Morale, Welfare and Recreation (MWR)," does allow slot machines in locations outside the 50 United States and its territories and possessions, unless prohibited by host-country laws or agreements. I understand that while the revenue generated from these slot machines is used to benefit Service members in many ways, they certainly may present a gambling risk for some. If confirmed, I will engage my colleagues in MWR to discuss the implications of continuing this policy of allowing slot machines to be used in overseas locations."

¹⁴ *Id.* "We address gambling disorders similar to how we treat other substance-related and addictive disorders. Gambling disorder has been added to our Addictive Substance Misuse Advisory Committees (ASMAC) portfolio. The ASMAC is a joint committee between Health Affairs and DoD Components to address both prevention and

6. What additional steps is the DOD taking to develop policies and programs aimed at preventing and treating gambling disorder within the military community?
7. Is the Department adequately resourced to effectively prevent and treat gambling disorder within the military community?

Thank you for your attention to this request. We look forward to continuing to work together on efforts to prevent and address gambling disorder among our servicemembers and veterans.


Sincerely,



Elizabeth Warren
United States Senator



Steve Daines
United States Senator



Susie Lee
Member of Congress

treatment of these problems. We are currently developing a Defense Health Agency Procedural Instruction, "Problematic Use by DoD Personnel," which will include clinical guidance on the treatment of gambling disorder."