



DEPARTMENT OF THE AIR FORCE

OFFICE OF THE CHIEF OF STAFF

UNITED STATES AIR FORCE

WASHINGTON DC 20330

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Washington, DC 20330-1670

03/17/2021

The Honorable James M. Inhofe
United States Senator
205 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Inhofe:

Thank you for the opportunity to provide my military advice on the draft Military Justice Improvement and Increasing Prevention Act (MJIIPA). The Air Force remains fully committed to preventing and rooting out sexual assault and sexual harassment in our service. I know this requires accountability, and I am open to improving our processes that deliver justice. Climate, culture and prevention efforts are equally or more important to accountability in driving down the instances of these crimes. The combination of these efforts must continually grow trust and at the same time maintain good order and discipline. My views consider all these factors. But my objective remains to root this misconduct out of the Air Force with every tool available.

The linkages between prevention, deterrence, reporting, victim support, prosecution, and accountability are complex. I do not know if removing commanders' authority to act on certain offenses will affect the occurrence of sexual assault to the degree we all desire and need. I do know we must do more than just address prosecution and accountability. We must also address climate, culture, and prevention to create an environment where our Airmen can reach their full potential without fear of sexual assault or harassment.

The relationships of commander authority and accountability to readiness, mission accomplishment, and good order and discipline are also complex because the commander's responsibilities are woven through every question you pose. The Air Force places great trust and confidence in our commanders to maintain readiness while protecting our most valuable assets – our Airmen. Commanders serve a critical role by enforcing standards, and then bringing together all resources and support programs. Removing elements of authority will likely create some risk, particularly if poorly scoped, communicated, or implemented. That does not mean we should not try new measures if we believe they will increase accountability and reduce sexual assaults. However, supporting analysis associated with any proposed changes would be beneficial in determining the best approaches and the way forward on implementation. Regardless of the approach chosen, we should recognize the complexity of human behavior, measure meaningful results, and be ready to adjust as we inevitably learn.

If commanders' authority is removed as outlined in MJIIPA, I believe there are certain principles that will reduce risk in the questions you ask. The scope of the offenses covered should be specific to the sexual assault and harassment. The path should be clear and certain to an Airman

considering reporting. The path, from reporting to accountability, should also be timely and responsive. The changes should increase trust in the process and trust in those charged with its application. Implementation should reinforce commander's responsibilities in the process, not relieve them from it. Finally, we need accurate measures that match our service members' experiences, to be confident that we are driving down instances of sexual assault and sexual harassment.

We need Airmen to have trust in our accountability processes *and* their leadership. To build trust and reduce risk to readiness we must support the roles and responsibilities of the commander in our efforts to prevent and address offenses of sexual assault and harassment. Any changes must present both our Airmen and commanders with a clear sense of the accountability tools available, and a clear sense of the roles and responsibilities of the varied entities charged with enforcing accountability for crimes of sexual assault and harassment.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide this information, and we appreciate your support of the men and women of the United States Air Force.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Charles Q. Brown, Jr.', with a stylized flourish at the end.

CHARLES Q. BROWN, JR.
General, USAF
Chief of Staff