

United States Senate
WASHINGTON, DC 20510

July 29, 2022

The Honorable Kathleen Hicks
Deputy Secretary of Defense
1000 Defense Pentagon
Washington, D.C. 20301-1000

Dear Secretary Hicks:

We respectfully request your urgent support for the Department of Defense (DoD) civilian families of the Portsmouth Naval Shipyard's (PNSY) childcare center who were recently displaced from the center as a result of the childcare prioritization guidance. The center accommodates families from multiple services including Navy, Army and Air Force, as well as DoD civilian employees who are invaluable contributors to the important work being done at PNSY on behalf of the nation. While we understand the childcare capacity issues DoD is facing, it is simply unacceptable to displace families from DoD childcare centers without facilitating a seamless and equitable transition of care to an alternative center. Given the significant resources the Department has at its disposal and proactive stance to submit reprogramming requests to the Congress for mid-year 'fact of life' issues, we urge the Department to provide additional resources for childcare for Portsmouth Naval Shipyard employees as well as other affected childcare centers.

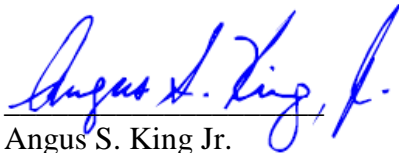
As you know, in June of this year, the Department announced revised supplanting regulations that adversely impacted DoD civilian families utilizing PNSY's childcare center. The subsequent decision by the Navy forced several dozen DoD civilian families to obtain alternative childcare facilities off-base. Affected families were only given a 45-day notice of their displacement and inadequate support to locate new accommodations for their childcare needs, leaving civilian families scrambling to care for their children. Although the Navy provided some assistance to help impacted families identify Maine and New Hampshire accredited childcare providers, many of these are already at capacity, not conveniently located or overly expensive for the affected families to afford. The Navy's efforts to mitigate the impact on displaced families has fallen short of what we owe our invaluable civilian workforce.

The impact of this decision and the subsequent displacement of civilian families not only harms civilian workforce readiness but also further impairs recruiting and retention, which have been longstanding challenges for our public shipyards. Reliable childcare is a strong incentive to work at PNSY, and everything should be done to increase capacity on installations and implement programs to secure commensurately affordable childcare in the community for families that are unable to use on-base childcare services. We understand that current Navy childcare capacity limitations stem largely from staffing challenges at the PNSY childcare facility and that there are efforts underway to hire additional qualified direct care staff. Finally, in light of anticipated growth in operations at PNSY and the nearby Pease Air National Guard Base, we anticipate a sustained increase in demand for childcare services in the area. Therefore, we urge you to ensure that you are putting in place long-term staffing, resourcing and facilities plans that will provide the childcare needed to meet increasing demand in the region. Further, we request that the Department do its utmost to streamline hiring processes for qualified direct care staff to swiftly

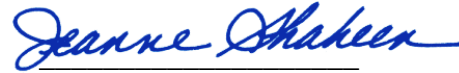
address this issue. We also urge you to work with states to ensure that all available federal child care support funding is fully, effectively and efficiently utilized. In order to ensure that the Navy is moving to address the childcare concerns that we have identified, we request a briefing on the Navy's response plans to address acute childcare challenges at PNSY and long-term plans to meet childcare needs in the region.

Adequately and swiftly addressing shortfalls in quality of life such as childcare, housing and parking for the DoD civilian workforce is essential to our national security readiness and sustaining our military-industrial base. We are deeply proud of the important work being done for our nation at PNSY and believe that we must take every step necessary to ensure we are providing for the essential workers that we rely on. Thank you for your and service to our country.

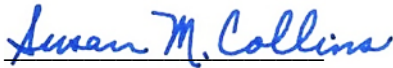
Sincerely,



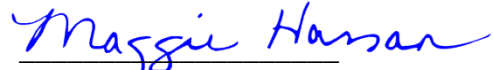
Angus S. King Jr.
United States Senator



Jeanne Shaheen
United States Senator



Susan M. Collins
United States Senator



Margaret Wood Hassan
United States Senator

Cc: The Honorable Carlos Del Toro, Secretary of the Navy