

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20510

October 30, 2023

The Honorable Jack Reed
Chairman
Senate Armed Services Committee
228 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Roger Wicker
Ranking Member
Senate Armed Services Committee
205 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Mike Rogers
Chairman
House Armed Services Committee
2216 Rayburn Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Adam Smith
Ranking Member
House Armed Services Committee
2216 Rayburn Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Chairmen Reed and Rogers and Ranking Members Wicker and Smith:

As the House and Senate conferees negotiate the final Fiscal Year (FY) 2024 National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA), we urge you to retain section 1049 of the Senate-passed NDAA (S. 2226), which would extend installation and commissary exchange access for surviving spouses of fallen servicemembers who choose to remarry. This provision, a component of the bipartisan *Love Lives On Act* (S. 1266), would restore a vital privilege that our surviving spouses deserve and ensures they can retain their connection to the military community they have long been a part of, irrespective of whether they remarry after the death of their military spouse.

Sec. 1049 Access to Commissary and Exchange Privileges for Remarried Spouses

Many surviving military spouses lost their loved ones due to injuries or illnesses related to their military member's service or while deployed in combat operations. Under current law, certain benefits that these surviving spouses have been granted from the Department of Defense (DOD) and the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) by virtue of their fallen loved one's service are terminated if they remarry. Those benefits include access to military installations and commissaries. However, many surviving spouses call these communities home, rely on commissaries to provide for them and their families, and want to have a continuity of access for themselves and their children after the loss of their spouse. Some even require access to installations to transport their children, who retain access to many services and benefits on installations and have friends who still live on post. It is unconscionable that we should deny these surviving spouses these privileges, opportunities, and support systems because they are lucky enough to find love again following the untimely loss of their military spouse.

That is why we urge conferees to retain the bipartisan provisions contained in Sec. 1049 that would restore installation and commissary access to surviving spouses of fallen servicemembers who choose to remarry. This would allow them to retain access to bases, commissaries, and Morale, Welfare, and Recreation facilities to the same degree that similarly eligible but single surviving spouses have. This provision does not create a new privilege for these families but restores one that has been unfairly and unnecessarily taken from them. Additionally, the Senate amendment also included language to give DOD sufficient time to implement these changes properly.

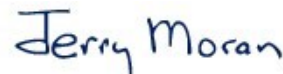
This provision enjoys broad bipartisan and bicameral support, which is why our amendment passed by unanimous consent on the Senate floor and was also included as section 1049 in the House-passed version of H.R. 2670. The military community rightly emphasizes to surviving spouses that they will always be part of the broader military family and a welcome part of the military community after the death of their loved one in service to our country. It is time Congress restored these privileges to fulfill that promise and ensure that surviving spouses can maintain their close connection to the military communities for which they have sacrificed so much.

We commend you on your leadership and commitment to our fallen servicemembers and their families, and urge you to preserve this provision in the final FY 2024 NDAA conference agreement.

Sincerely,



Raphael Warnock
United States Senator



Jerry Moran
United States Senator



John Hickenlooper
United States Senator



Lisa Murkowski
United States Senator




Jacky Rosen
United States Senator



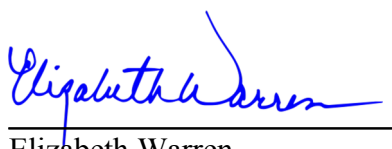
John Boozman
United States Senator



Mazie K. Hirono
United States Senator



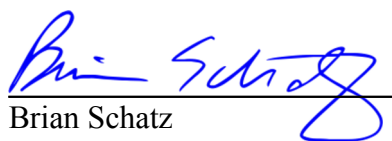
Thomas R. Carper
United States Senator



Elizabeth Warren
United States Senator



Jeffrey A. Merkley
United States Senator



Brian Schatz
United States Senator