



More Child Care and Jobs for Military Families Act

Introduced by Rep. Susie Lee (D-NV) and Rep. Don Bacon (R-NE)

The Need:

- Servicemembers and their families all across the country report that one of the most common challenges with military life is access to affordable, high-quality child care.
 - A lack of confidence in the availability of care for a child on any given day compounds the serious demands military life already places on families through odd hours, stressful day-to-day tasks, and regular difficulties securing spouse employment.
- Each branch of the military acknowledges that child care access is a serious issue and improving its quality, affordability, and availability nationwide is a top readiness priority.
 - As of January 2023, in the Air Force and Space Forces, there were 4,630 children, 5-years-old and younger, on a waiting list for on-base child care.¹
 - The Marine Corps has reported a child care waitlist totaling approximately 1,400 children,² while the Navy reported its list in March 2023 stood at 5,575 kids.³
 - Across the military, the average wait time for the child development centers (CDCs) has hovered at more than 130 days.
- Another major stressor in the lives of military families is spouse employment due to limited job opportunities and complications with licensure and certification while moving place to place.
 - The more than 680,000 active-duty spouses are a critical part of the military community, although they face unique challenges due to their spouse's military service and demands upon their families to move base to base.⁶
 - While military spouses engage in a wide variety of professions, many have sought to open their own at-home child care businesses, often through military programs.
 - Unfortunately, too many are held back by confusing red tape and variations in at-home child care certification standards and requirements, preventing them from taking advantage of a reliable job opportunity and from expanding the quality child care options so desperately needed across military installations.
- Each military service has tried to improve military spouse employment options and to address the child care shortage in a variety of ways, including by increasing wages and other incentives, by offering training programs, and by reviewing and updating hiring practices to ensure a high-quality, reliable child care workforce.
- Unfortunately, waitlists for child care remain far too long, with an ongoing shortage of qualified workers, low pay, high turnover, lengthy hiring processes, and overdue facility renovations, while many spouses still struggle to secure reliable employment upon moving to a new location.
- Child care and spouse employment have a direct impact on our national readiness and on the retention of our servicemembers and their families. More must be done to address these key quality of life – and force multiplier – issues, which are critical to mission success.

What This Bill Does:

- The *More Child Care and Jobs for Military Families Act* provides a common-sense path forward for addressing existing limitations and improving the possibilities available to military families in both child care and spouse employment.

- This bipartisan legislation directs the Department of Defense to conduct a three-year study into at-home child care programs, with an eye to difficulties experienced in opening, closing, and relocating businesses across military facilities.
 - The study would assess the complications associated with varied certification and licensing requirements base to base, as well as the impact on spouse employment.
- After completing the study, the Department would then be required to complete a feasibility study into standardizing licensure and certification for at-home child care, in order to better address the child care shortage impacting so many families, while opening the door to more accessible and reliable spouse employment opportunities.
 - This bipartisan bill lays the groundwork for advancing substantive solutions to help the child care and spouse employment issues that impact readiness and retention in military.
- This legislation was included in the House-passed FY24 National Defense Authorization Act, passed as an amendment also co-led by Reps. Lee and Bacon.

For more information or to cosponsor or endorse this bill, please contact:

Sara Harper, sara.harper@mail.house.gov, or Bowen Peard, bowen.peard@mail.house.gov, in Congresswoman Susie Lee's office.

¹CMSAF Bass opening statement MilConVA Quality of Life Hearing

²Witness Statement for USMC MilConVA Quality of Life Hearing

³[Navy reduces child care waitlist but needs workers to keep up momentum | Stars and Stripes](#)

⁴[More could be done to help dual-military couples, DoD IG reports](#)

⁵SMA Witness Statement for MilConVA Quality of Life Hearing

⁶[DMDC-SpouseEducationEmployment-2017.pdf \(militaryonesource.mil\)](#)