



June 5, 2015

The Honorable John McCain, Chairman  
Senate Armed Services Committee  
228 Russell Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Jack Reed, Ranking Member  
Senate Armed Services Committee  
228 Russell Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Lindsey Graham, Chairman  
Subcommittee on Personnel  
Senate Armed Services Committee  
228 Russell Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Kirsten Gillibrand, Ranking Member  
Subcommittee on Personnel  
Senate Armed Services Committee  
228 Russell Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman McCain, Ranking Member Reed, Chairman Graham and Ranking Member Gillibrand:

The TRICARE for Kids (TFK) Coalition, a stakeholder group of children's health care advocacy and professional organizations, disability advocacy groups, military and veterans' service organizations and military families committed to ensuring that TRICARE meets the unique health needs of the more than two million children of military families covered by TRICARE, wishes to thank you for the inclusion of Section 735 in S. 1376, the National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) for Fiscal Year 2016. Section 735, which directs the Secretary of Defense to submit a report setting forth a plan of the Department of Defense to improve pediatric care and related services for children of members of the Armed Forces and all children covered by TRICARE, is greatly needed and your direction to the Secretary is much appreciated.

While all children have unique needs as compared to adults, children in military families face distinct experiences due to the very nature of their parents' service to our nation. The practical difficulties that accompany deployments and frequent relocations must be taken into consideration when fashioning the health, medical and social support systems necessary to serve these families.

As we wrote to you in April, we were concerned about the report that was issued in July 2014 by the Defense Health Agency in response to Section 735 of the 2013 NDAA, which directed the Secretary of Defense to perform a comprehensive review of the military health system as it relates to children. While that report concluded that the military health system meets the needs of children, including children with special health care needs, it still identified gaps and potential problem areas with coverage of preventive health services, behavioral health services, determining medical necessity, data collection and data utilization, to name a few. In addition, while the report identified gaps and “areas for clarification,” it did not make any recommendations or plans to address any of these issues. That is why we are so pleased that Section 735 in the Senate FY 2016 NDAA directs the Department of Defense to issue a report that outlines its plan to improve pediatric care and related services.

In particular, the new report would require the Department of Defense to prepare a plan to align preventive pediatric care under the TRICARE program with preventive standards required by the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act (AAP’s Bright Futures for children), guidelines established for such care by the Early and Periodic Screening, Diagnosis, and Treatment program under the Medicaid program and recommendations by organizations that specialize in pediatrics. We also appreciate the directive to develop a uniform definition of “pediatric medical necessity;” revise certification requirements for residential treatment centers; develop measures to evaluate and improve access to pediatric care; improve the quality of and access to behavioral health care; mitigate the impact of permanent changes of station and mitigate deficiencies in data collection, data utilization, and data analysis to improve pediatric care and related services for children of members of the Armed Forces.

The TFK Coalition reiterates its appreciation for your leadership and thanks you again for including this report required by Section 735 in the Senate FY 2016 NDAA. We look forward to working with you on these issues going forward and would respectfully request, as a next step in the TRICARE for Kids process, a hearing specific to the impact on children of both the current system and any proposed changes.

Thank you for working with the TFK Coalition, military families and the Department of Defense to ensure that the current and future military health care system truly meets the unique health needs of children of military families.

Sincerely,

**TRICARE for Kids Coalition**

American Academy of Pediatrics  
Children’s Hospital Association  
Commissioned Officers Association of the United States Public Health Services  
Easter Seals  
Family Voices  
March of Dimes  
Military Child Education Coalition  
Military Family Advisory Network  
Military Kids Matter  
Military Officers Association of America

Military Special Needs Network  
Military Spouses Behavioral Needs Clinicians  
National Association for Children's Behavioral Health  
National Military Family Association