

# United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

July 28, 2017

The Honorable James N. Mattis  
Secretary of Defense  
1100 Defense Pentagon  
Washington, D.C. 20301

Dear Secretary Mattis,

We are writing regarding the President's announcement via Twitter yesterday that transgender Americans can no longer serve in the military. We strongly oppose this policy change, and urge you to advise the President against it. This announcement contradicts existing Defense Department policies, undermines our military readiness, and puts our transgender service members as well as their commanders in an impossible situation. We appreciate General Dunford's message that no policy changes should be made until implementation guidelines have been issued. We further write to request that, at a minimum, you do not separate any service member due to the person's gender identity until you have completed the assessment that you announced on June 30, have reported back to Congress about any challenges that you foresee in the accession and retention of transgender troops, and determined the Department is unable to mitigate these challenges.

Transgender Americans who serve in our military put their lives on the line to protect America. They make up a small percentage of the military population, but are reportedly twice as likely to serve in the military as other Americans. Transgender service members have been serving openly since the policy was changed in June 2016 and in that time no service has reported any issues associated with their service.


Forcing these brave Americans out of our military would be cruel and discriminatory. It would harm our readiness by denying the military of these service members' capabilities and requiring the military to replace them at a time when the recruiting pool for the services continues to shrink. It will harm morale in the military as service members see their brothers and sisters in arms – some of whom are currently forward deployed – thrown out simply because of their identity. And the uncertainty associated with making policy this way is already harming our military readiness and morale, as transgender service members and their superiors struggle to make sense of the policy and what it means for them today and tomorrow.


Any American who wants to serve and meets the standards should be allowed to serve our country. Transgender service members are serving with honor and distinction today and we ask that you, as our Secretary of Defense, assure them that their service will not be ended simply because of who they are.

Sincerely,

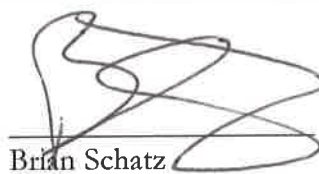
  
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United States Senator



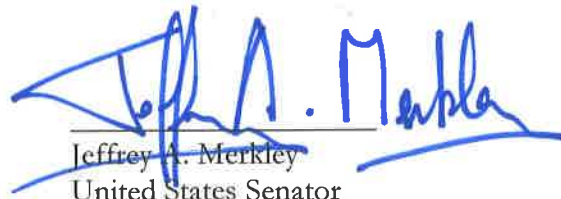
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