



# **Duckworth Secures Commitments from DOD Nominee to Prioritize Critical Military Readiness Policies**

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WASHINGTON, D.C. — During a U.S. Senate Armed Services Committee (SASC) hearing today for Department of Defense (DoD) nominees, combat Veteran and U.S. Senator Tammy Duckworth (D-IL) secured commitments from the Honorable Gilbert R. Cisneros, Jr., Nominee to be Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness, to prioritize policies like Duckworth’s *Servicemember Parental Leave Equity Act* when considering ways to increase military readiness, improve outcomes for military families

and ensure the DoD recruits and retains talent. Duckworth served in the Reserve Forces for 23 years and is Chair of the SASC Airland Subcommittee. Video of the Senator's remarks can be found [here](#).

### Key quotes from Senator Duckworth's hearing remarks:

- “According to numerous studies, paid family leave offers clear advantages to both employers and families. Yet, depending on their branch of service and family situation, many servicemembers currently only receive 2 or 3 weeks of parental leave.”
- “Paid family leave is critical for the physical, mental and psychological health of military families welcoming new family members.”
- “We can't change all the operational requirements that take military parents away from their children, but we can extend parental leave benefits to give all parents—not just birth parents—adequate time to bond with and care for their children at the beginning of their parent-child relationship.”
- “In order to recruit and retain the best and brightest, DoD must modernize its parental leave policy to be more competitive with the private sector and remove at least some of the pressures that force dedicated servicemembers to choose between serving their country and doing right by their family.”

In May, Duckworth [introduced](#) a package of bills that would help strengthen military readiness and better support military families by tackling the military childcare crisis and expanding parental leave for servicemembers. The *Servicemember Parental Leave Equity Act* would, among other provisions, make sure that all primary and secondary caregivers in the military can access 12 weeks of paid parental leave. The *Military Childcare Expansion Act* would, among other provisions, better equip the Pentagon to help fix the 135 Military Child Development Centers (CDCs) operating in “poor” or “failing” condition.

Duckworth was one of the first handful of Army women to fly combat missions during Operation Iraqi Freedom. She served in the Reserve Forces for 23 years before retiring from military service in 2014 at the rank of Lieutenant Colonel. She served on the House Armed Services Committee (HASC) during her four years serving in the U.S. House of Representatives.