

Duckworth, Panetta Lead Call For Expanding Dod Basic Needs Allowance Program In FY24 NDAA

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WASHINGTON, D.C. – Combat Veteran and U.S. Senator Tammy Duckworth (D-IL), member of the U.S. Senate Armed Services Committee, and U.S. Representative Jimmy Panetta (D-CA-19), member of the House Committee on Armed Services, are leading 18 of their colleagues in a bipartisan, bicameral call to the leadership of the Senate and

House Armed Services Committees, urging them to retain the House language in the Fiscal Year 2024 National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) expanding servicemember eligibility for the Department of Defense (DoD) Basic Needs Allowance (BNA) program. The BNA program provides a monthly allowance to qualified eligible low-income servicemembers with dependents. This allowance addresses food insecurity faced by some military families and improves overall military readiness. The expanded program will address the needs of the growing number of servicemembers who are food insecure and will support long-term efforts in solving military hunger.

“Our servicemembers are our military’s greatest resource,” the Members wrote. “When they experience hunger, we put our national security at risk. We must give members of our military every possible tool to focus on the mission and be ready to defend our nation when called to action. As you negotiate during conference and reconcile the differences between the House and Senate bills, we urge you to do right by our servicemembers and their families, who sacrifice considerably when they volunteer to serve.”

According to a July 2022 study from the Office of the Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness, 24 percent of all active duty servicemembers experienced some level of food insecurity over the prior 12 months, totaling more than 286,000 individuals. As it is currently implemented, the BNA reaches fewer than 3,000 servicemembers.

U.S. Senators Richard Blumenthal (D-CT), Cory Booker (D-NJ), Dick Durbin (D-IL), John Fetterman (D-PA), Kirsten Gillibrand (D-NY), Angus King (I-ME), Lisa Murkowski (R-AK), Patty Murray (D-WA), Raphael Warnock (D-GA) and Peter Welch (D-VT), and U.S. Representatives Sanford D. Bishop Jr. (D-GA-02), Sara Jacobs (D-CA-51), Mike Levin (D-CA-49), Cathy McMorris Rodgers (R-WA-05), Gwen Moore (D-WI-04), Marilyn Strickland (D-WA-10), Jill Tokuda (D-HI-02) and Susan Wild (D-PA-07) also signed the letter.

Duckworth has been a fierce advocate in helping curb our military’s hunger crisis. Duckworth successfully [secured](#) a provision in the *FY22 NDAA* that required DoD to create a limited-duration basic needs allowance for servicemembers below 130% of the federal poverty guidelines to assist them with affording basic necessities, particularly food. Then, in [last year’s NDAA](#), she went even further and was able to adjust this income from 130% to 150% to help make sure even more military families have enough to eat. Earlier this year, Duckworth [reintroduced](#) the bipartisan *Military Family Nutrition Access Act*, which would address this critical issue by excluding Basic Allowance for Housing from income calculations used to determine Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program eligibility.

A full copy of the letter is available [here](#).