

Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

July 29, 2020

The Honorable Adam Smith
Chairman
House Armed Services Committee
2216 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Mac Thornberry
Ranking Member
House Armed Services Committee
2216 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable James Inhofe
Chairman
Senate Committee on Armed Services
228 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Jack Reed
Ranking Member
Senate Committee on Armed Services
228 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Chairman Smith, Chairman Inhofe, Ranking Member Thornberry, and Ranking Member Reed,

For too long, sexual assault has been a shameful and unacceptable part of our military. As former service members, we have experienced and witnessed sexual harassment in our own careers and know firsthand that it is past time for serious change.

Specialist Vanessa Guillen's murder is a devastating example of the issues women service members face in the United States military and the consequences of not having appropriate reporting mechanisms in place for victims to feel safe to be heard. We are deeply disturbed by the lack of urgency surrounding Spc. Guillen's case from the commanding officers at Fort Hood. The fact that Spc. Guillen's disappearance was taken seriously only after the case drew public attention underscores just how serious the problem is -- it should never take a public campaign for justice to be done.

Our military members face countless threats when they choose to support and defend our country, including dangerous missions all over the world. And while this may be part of the job, threats, mistreatment, and sexual assault at the hands of fellow service members are not.

As the only women veterans serving in the House of Representatives, we have an obligation to speak up for Spc. Vanessa Guillen and those who have survived sexual assault while serving our country. We ask that your committees hold hearings into the murder of Spc. Vanessa Guillen, support legislative proposals to address sexual assault and misconduct, and work to implement policies that root out the culture of sexual harassment and assault in the Armed Forces.

Furthermore, we would like to voice our strong support for two provisions in this year's National Defense Authorization Act offered by Representatives Jackie Speier and Tulsi Gabbard. Rep. Speier's amendment will establish a pilot program at the service academies for a chief prosecutor

to make binding referrals on special victims cases. Rep. Gabbard's amendment will require an investigation of the "bad papers" discharges over the last twenty years, to better understand the ways the military justice system has treated minorities, survivors of sexual trauma, and whistleblowers. These amendments will take concrete action to address the culture of sexual harassment and assault in our Armed Forces.

Spc. Vanessa Guillen and her family deserve a comprehensive congressional response to her murder and the conditions that enabled her abuser. It is far past time for Congress to fulfill its responsibility to our men and women in uniform and fix this broken system. We look forward to working with you to ensure they receive the justice they deserve.

Sincerely,



Mikie Sherrill
Member of Congress



Chrissy Houlahan
Member of Congress



Elaine Luria
Member of Congress



Tulsi Gabbard
Member of Congress