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(Original Signature of Member)

116TH CONGRESS
2D SESSION

H. R. _____

To improve the ability of the Department of Defense to effectively prevent,
track, and respond to military-connected child abuse.

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Mr. CISNEROS introduced the following bill; which was referred to the
Committee on _____

A BILL

To improve the ability of the Department of Defense to
effectively prevent, track, and respond to military-con-
nected child abuse.

1 *Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representa-*
2 *tives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,*

3 **SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.**

4 This Act may be cited as the “End Military-Con-
5 nected Child Abuse and Neglect Act”.

1 **SEC. 2. ACTIONS TO ADDRESS MILITARY-CONNECTED**
2 **CHILD ABUSE.**

3 (a) **IN GENERAL.**—Consistent with the recommenda-
4 tions of the Government Accountability Office in the re-
5 port titled “Increased Guidance and Collaboration Needed
6 to Improve DOD’s Tracking and Response to Child
7 Abuse” (GAO–20–110), the Secretary of Defense shall
8 carry out activities to improve the ability of the Depart-
9 ment of Defense to effectively prevent, track, and respond
10 to military-connected child abuse.

11 (b) **ACTIVITIES REQUIRED.**—The activities carried
12 out under subsection (a) shall include the following:

13 (1) The Secretary of Defense shall expand the
14 scope of the Department of Defense’s centralized
15 database on problematic sexual behavior in children
16 and youth to track information on all incidents in-
17 volving child abuse reported to a Family Advocacy
18 Program or investigated by a military law enforce-
19 ment organization, regardless of whether the pepe-
20 trator of the abuse is another child, an adult, or a
21 person in a noncaregiving role at the time of the in-
22 cident.

23 (2) The Secretary of Defense, in consultation
24 with the Secretary of each military department, shall
25 ensure—

1 (A) that each Family Advocacy Program
2 records, in a database of the Program, the date
3 on which the Program notified a military law
4 enforcement organization of a reported incident
5 of child abuse; and

6 (B) that each military law enforcement or-
7 ganization records, in a database of the organi-
8 zation, the date on which the organization noti-
9 fied a Family Advocacy Program of a reported
10 incident of child abuse.

11 (3) The Secretary of Defense, in consultation
12 with the Secretary of each military department, shall
13 issue guidance that clarifies the process through
14 which the Family Advocacy Program of an Armed
15 Force will receive, and incorporate into the Pro-
16 gram's central registry, information regarding child
17 abuse allegations involving members of that Armed
18 Force and dependents of such members in cases in
19 which such allegations were previously recorded by
20 the Family Advocacy Program of another Armed
21 Force. Such guidance shall include a mechanism for
22 monitoring the process to ensure that the process is
23 carried out consistently.

24 (4) Each Armed Force shall develop a process
25 to monitor how reported incidents of child abuse are

1 screened at military installations to help ensure that
2 all reported child abuse incidents that should be pre-
3 sented to an Incident Determination Committee are
4 consistently presented and tracked.

5 (5) The Secretary of Defense shall ensure that
6 the Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and
7 Readiness, in consultation with the Director of the
8 Department of Defense Education Activity, clarifies
9 Department of Defense Education Activity guidance
10 to define what types of child abuse incidents must
11 be reported as serious incidents to help ensure that
12 all serious incidents of which Department of Defense
13 Education Activity leadership needs to be informed
14 are accurately and consistently reported by school
15 administrators.

16 (6) The Secretary of Defense, in consultation
17 with the Secretaries of the military departments,
18 shall expand the voting membership of each Incident
19 Determination Committee to include medical per-
20 sonnel with requisite knowledge and experience.

21 (7) Each Armed Force shall implement proce-
22 dures to provide the families of child abuse victims
23 with comprehensive information on how reported in-
24 cidents of child abuse will be addressed. Such prac-
25 tices may include the development of a guide that—

1 (A) explains the processes the Family Ad-
2 vocacy Program and military law enforcement
3 organizations will follow to address the report;
4 and

5 (B) identifies services and other resources
6 available to victims and their families.

7 (8) The Secretary of Defense, in consultation
8 with the Secretaries of the military departments,
9 shall issue guidance to clarify the circumstances
10 under which military commanders may exercise the
11 authority to remove a child from a potentially unsafe
12 home on a military installation outside the United
13 States.

14 (9) The Secretary of Defense shall ensure that
15 the Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and
16 Readiness, in consultation with the Director of the
17 Defense Health Agency, establishes processes that
18 help ensure children who are sexually abused outside
19 the United States have timely access to a certified
20 pediatric sexual assault forensic examiner to conduct
21 an examination. Such processes may include certi-
22 fying pediatricians or adult sexual assault forensic
23 examiners as pediatric examiners during mandatory
24 training or establishing shared regional assets.

1 (10) The Secretary of Defense, in consultation
2 with the Deputy Attorney General, shall seek to im-
3 prove communication between military criminal in-
4 vestigative organizations and United States Attor-
5 neys for relevant cases involving child victims, in-
6 cluding by seeking to ensure that military investiga-
7 tors are notified when a prosecution is declined and
8 that such notice includes the reasons for the declina-
9 tion when appropriate.

10 (11) The Secretary of each military department
11 shall seek to develop a memorandum of under-
12 standing with the National Children’s Alliance that
13 makes children’s advocacy center services available
14 to all military installations of the department and in-
15 creases awareness of those services across the de-
16 partment.

17 (c) DEADLINE.—The Secretary of Defense shall
18 carry out the activities described in subsection (b) not
19 later than one year after the date of the enactment of this
20 Act.

21 (d) DEFINITIONS.—In this section:

22 (1) The term “Armed Forces” means the
23 Army, Navy, Air Force, and Marine Corps.

24 (2) The term “child abuse” means any abuse of
25 a child (including physical abuse, sexual abuse, emo-

1 tional abuse, and neglect) regardless of whether the
2 perpetrator of the abuse is another child, an adult,
3 or a person in a noncaregiving role.

4 (3) The term “Incident Determination Com-
5 mittee” means a committee established at a military
6 installation that is responsible for reviewing reported
7 incidents of child abuse and determining whether
8 such incidents constitute child abuse according to
9 the applicable criteria of the Department of Defense.

10 (4) The term “military-connected”, when used
11 with respect to child abuse, means child abuse occur-
12 ring on a military installation or involving a depend-
13 ent of a member of the Armed Forces.