ASIAN AMERICANS
ADVANCING
JUSTICE
AAJC

Senator Roger Wicker
Chairman
Senate Committee on Armed Services
Russell Senate Building, Room 228
Washington, D.C. 20510

Senator Jack Reed
Ranking Member
Senate Committee on Armed Services
Russell Senate Building, Room 228
Washington, D.C. 20510

Representative Mike Rogers
Chairman
House Armed Services Committee
2216 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Representative Adam Smith
Ranking Member
House Armed Services Committee
2216 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

October 19, 2026

Dear Chairmen Wicker and Rogers and Ranking Members Reed and Smith,

As you work to reconcile the differences between the House version of the National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) for Fiscal Year 2027 (**H.R. 8800**) and the Senate version (**S. 4784**), Asian Americans Advancing Justice | AAJC strongly urges lawmakers to reject provisions which undermine civil rights, target marginalized communities, or constitute flawed approaches to national security which could encourage racial profiling and ultimately harm U.S. economic interests.[1] The NDAA plays a vital role in ensuring our nation's defense, but it must also uphold the core values of justice, equality, and inclusion that strengthen our democracy and armed forces.[2] Unfortunately, this year's legislation includes provisions that depart from these principles and threaten these core values.

There are several provisions in H.R. 8800 that AAJC strongly opposes. As detailed below, Section 3118 reflects a misguided approach to research security while Section 2829 addresses the consequences of discriminatory land laws. Additionally, we oppose provisions that would undermine diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) initiatives and LGBTQ issues, etc.

- **Section 3118**: We strongly object to the withholding of funds for any National Laboratory which admits entry to a "covered visitor." According to this provision, a "covered visitor" is a foreign national from a country of concern, who is not a Department of Energy employee/contractor or has otherwise requested access to a facility. While the amendment contains a carve out for lawful permanent residents, it nonetheless fails to recognize that many qualified individuals who need and deserve access to these facilities are legally in

[1] National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2027, H.R. 8800, 119th Cong. (2026); *see also* National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2027, S. 4784, 119th Cong. (2026).
[2] Veronica Stracqualursi, *On Memorial Day, Austin Reflects on Strength of U.S. Military and Dismisses Adversaries' Criticism*, CNN (May 31, 2021), https://www.cnn.com/2021/05/31/politics/lloyd-austin-us-military-diversity-china-russia-cnntv/index.html.

this country on a temporary basis, such as graduate students on F-1 visas or highly skilled workers on H1-B visas. By effectively excluding these individuals from access, this provision risks undermining the research enterprise and turning away the very talent that helps strengthens U.S. science, innovation, and economic competitiveness.

- **Section 2829**: The language of this provision calls for a report of any "real property transaction" within a radius of 100 miles around military installations that has any connection with China, Iran, North Korea, and Russia. We are concerned that the parameters for this report are overly broad and could contribute to the expansion of discriminatory land laws nationwide. Given the number and geographic distribution of military installations across the country, this scope is far too wide and impracticable. For example, a 100-mile radius around Joint Base Andrews in Maryland would cover any real property transactions with just China in New Jersey, Delaware, Maryland, Virginia, Washington D.C., West Virginia, and Pennsylvania.[3] Finally, we have serious concerns about whether the Secretary of Defense would prepare and submit this report in a sufficiently objective and rigorous manner.

- **Section 519A**: This amendment would prohibit individuals who are foreign nationals from China, Iran, North Korea, and Russia from enlisting into any branch of the U.S. military and would impose additional barriers to promotion for affected service members. Singling individuals would on the basis of national origin is blatant discrimination and fails to recognize the longstanding contributions of immigrants to our armed forces, including the hundreds of thousands of veterans who have earned citizenship through military service. This legal pathway should be encouraged, not restricted.[4]

- **Section 521**: This amendment would ban foreign nationals from certain countries from enrolling in all U.S. military academies. This is both xenophobic and short-sighted as each service academy has been allowed to enroll up to 60 international students for decades without controversy.[5]

- **Section 579B**: This amendment would prohibit male participation in female sports in Department of Defense Educational Activity (DODEA) schools. Research has found that not only have inclusive polices in states increased girls' sports participation, but

[3] Draw a 100 mile radius around Joint Base Andrews, Map Developers, https://www.mapdevelopers.com/draw-circle-tool.php (Type in "Joint Base Andrews" into the address bar, then change the radius to 100, then click the "Zoom to Address" button followed by the "New Circle" button.)
[4] Jeanne Batalova, *Immigrant Veterans in the United States*, Migration Pol'y Inst. (May 9, 2024), https://www.migrationpolicy.org/journal/spotlight/immigrant-veterans-united-states.
[5] Can U.S. Military Academies Enroll International Students?, Dep't. of Homeland Security, https://studyinthestates.dhs.gov/2015/05/can-us-military-academies-enroll-international-students.

exclusionary policies such as this one would substantially harm the mental and physical welfare of transgender youth.[6]

- **Section 597 through 599F** (Subtitle K of Title V): This amendment would eliminate the requirement that military chaplains to be willing to work in a pluralistic environment or provide religious support to all members of the military regardless of their faith. Such a change would undermine the ability of chaplains to serve as a religiously diverse force and would be difficult to reconcile with the needs of a professional military where 30% of service members **do not** identify as Christian.[7]

- **Section 709**: This amendment would prevent TRICARE from covering certain gender-related medical procedures and treatments. Given that transgender individuals suffer high rates of suicide risk and that medical interventions are necessary to ensure their health and welfare, we believe that this language would cause significant harm to LGBTQ service members and their families.[8]

Thank you for considering our recommendations. We believe that a strong military is achieved through diversity and inclusion, and we urge you to ensure that the FY27 NDAA reflects these values. If you have any questions regarding these recommendations, please do not hesitate to reach out to Dennis Jing at djing@advancingjustice-aajc.org.

Sincerely,
Asian Americans Advancing Justice | AAJC

[6] Shoshana K. Goldberg & Thee Santos, *Fact Sheet: The Importance of Sports Participation for Transgender Youth*, Ctr. For Am. Progress (Mar. 18, 2021), https://www.americanprogress.org/article/fact-sheet-importance-sports-participation-transgender-youth/.
[7] Peter Smith, *The US Military Takes Pride in its Religious Diversity. Could that change if Hegseth takes over?*, PBS Newshour (Dec. 4, 2024), https://www.pbs.org/newshour/politics/the-u-s-military-takes-pride-in-its-religious-diversity-would-things-change-if-hegseth-takes-over.
[8] Human Rights Campaign, Get the Facts on Transgender Healthcare, https://www.hrc.org/resources/get-the-facts-on-transgender-healthcare.