



October 5, 2022

The Honorable Jack Reed
Chairman
Senate Armed Services Committee
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Adam Smith
Chairman
House Armed Services Committee
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable James Inhofe
Ranking Member
Senate Armed Services Committee
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Mike Rogers
Ranking Member
House Armed Services Committee
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Chairs Reed and Smith, and Ranking Members Inhofe and Rogers,

We write to express our strong support for an amendment included in the House version of the FY23 National Defense Authorization Act that would establish a pilot program for cryopreservation of gametes for 1,000 service members prior to deployment in support of combat or special operations. This provision is a crucial first step in understanding the potential need for this service throughout the Department of Defense. Importantly, however, there is a broad need for fertility testing and cryopreservation services for all service members with compromised fertility due to high operational tempo in both training and combat environments.

We are writing on behalf of Trent, an active duty sailor attached to Naval Special Warfare, with over 14 years of service, including six years training for and deploying during his time in the Navy. He and his wife Katie have one child but have struggled over the last several years to have more. Recently, Trent was diagnosed with male factor infertility. Over the course of multiple deployments, Trent has been repeatedly exposed to explosive materials, caustic substances, and repeatedly dived in water that was polluted with toxic industrial materials. Because they were trying to have children, Trent had a sperm analysis before he left for deployment and had another analysis when he returned, confirming that his fertility decreased significantly after the deployment.

Trent and Katie's story is just one of many examples of military families who struggle with fertility issues. If Trent would have been able to cryopreserve his gametes prior to his initial deployment, Katie and Trent would have a baseline to better understand the source of their fertility issues. It also would have served as a genetic insurance policy, ensuring that regardless of the potential injury or toxic exposure, Katie and Trent would have healthy gametes available as they look to expand their family. The need for these types of services has never been greater, with over 67% of military families reporting family building challenges in the 2021 Blue Star

Families annual Military Family Lifestyle Survey. (As a result of Military Family Building Coalition's advocacy, this was the first year the survey included family building questions.) Of those, 23% of active duty service members have had fertility challenges, as compared to approximately 12% in the civilian world. In addition, approximately 50% of infertility issues are attributable to a male factor, meaning that males are just as likely as females to be the cause of infertility.

As veteran and military service organizations dedicated to serving those who serve, we encourage you to support the House NDAA pilot program on cryopreservation of gametes. This is a low-cost, effective way to determine the need for these types of services more broadly and, in the immediate, provides up to 1,000 special operators the ability to preserve the ability to have a family in the face of devastating injury or illness while in service to our country. These brave service members sacrifice so much—they should not have to sacrifice the ability to have a family due to their service.

Sincerely,

Military Family Building Coalition

National Military Family Association

Military Officers Association of America

Global SOF Foundation