DCUC
DEFENSE CREDIT UNION COUNCIL

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Anthony Hernandez
President and CEO

August 5, 2026

The Honorable Pete Hegseth
Secretary of War
1000 Defense Pentagon
Washington, DC 20301-1000

Re: Request for DCUC Participation in the President's Military Spouse Commission and Meeting on Financial Readiness

Dear Secretary Hegseth:

On behalf of the Defense Credit Union Council and the more than 200 defense credit unions we represent, I commend President Donald J. Trump, you, and your family for the establishment of the President's Military Spouse Commission.

The Commission recognizes an essential national-security principle: military spouses are indispensable partners in the mission. Their ability to maintain stable households, sustain careers, care for their families, and navigate the demands of military life directly affects servicemember concentration, morale, retention, and force readiness.

I respectfully request that the Defense Credit Union Council be invited to participate in the Commission's work and that financial readiness be established as an explicit and permanent component of its mission. I also request an opportunity to meet with you, the Commission's leadership, or your senior personnel-and-readiness team to discuss the financial challenges facing military spouses and the practical solutions defense credit unions can help deliver.

The President's executive order authorizes the Commission's Chair or Executive Director to invite other individuals to participate and permits the establishment of subcommittees to support the Commission's work. These authorities provide an immediate and appropriate mechanism for including DCUC, defense credit unions, and military financial-readiness professionals in the Commission's deliberations.

As a retired United States Air Force colonel who served for 25 years—including as the Chief Financial Officer of Air Mobility Command and Commander of the 319th Mission Support Group—I have seen how family well-being becomes a readiness issue. Financial strain at home does not remain at home. It follows a servicemember to the flight line, the operations center, the motor pool, the watch floor, and the battlefield.

Financial readiness is military readiness.

Nearly every issue the Commission is directed to examine has a financial dimension. Employment disruption means lost household income. Childcare shortages can prevent a spouse from working or pursuing education. A permanent change of station can produce housing deposits, transportation costs, utility expenses, licensing fees, and weeks or months of reduced income. Healthcare interruptions, student debt, financial fraud, deployment-related expenses, and government funding lapses can destabilize even a financially responsible household.

The Commission's work will be most effective if financial consequences are considered not as a separate issue, but as a lens through which every recommendation involving employment, housing, healthcare, education, childcare, and deployment support is evaluated.

DCUC's Record of Supporting Military Spouses and Financial Readiness

DCUC is the only national association focused exclusively on championing credit unions serving military and veteran communities. For more than six decades, the Council has maintained close engagement with the Pentagon, Congress, federal financial regulators, installation leaders, and credit unions serving military communities in the United States and overseas.

Our request to participate is grounded in a sustained record of advocacy and practical action on behalf of military spouses and families.

Financial education throughout the military lifecycle. DCUC has promoted financial education that reflects the realities of military service rather than relying on generic, one-time instruction. Our work has supported education on budgeting, credit management, savings, homebuying, PCS preparation, deployment planning, fraud avoidance, transition to civilian employment, and retirement. DCUC has also created and distributed an Armed Forces Financial Guide and advocated for partnerships among defense credit unions, installation commanders, and Department financial-readiness offices to expand trusted, credit union-led training on military installations.

DCUC has urged the federal government to recognize defense credit unions as implementation partners in financial-literacy programs, including pilot projects, curriculum development, digital outreach, and outcomes reporting. We have specifically emphasized the need to reach military spouses experiencing employment instability and financial vulnerability, young, enlisted families with limited financial experience, military-connected children, and transitioning servicemembers.

Military spouse education, employment, and entrepreneurship. DCUC has advocated for financial-literacy partnerships in schools serving military communities, improved access to student-loan information and responsible refinancing, streamlined Public Service Loan Forgiveness, and loan-repayment assistance for military spouses whose careers and finances are disrupted by relocation.

We have also urged Congress and the Small Business Administration to expand access to capital for military spouse-owned businesses, prioritize veteran- and military spouse-owned enterprises in federal investment initiatives, modernize SBA systems, and utilize credit unions as trusted small-business lending partners. Military spouse entrepreneurship can provide the career portability and household income continuity that traditional employment often cannot during repeated PCS moves.

Housing affordability and homeownership. DCUC has consistently highlighted the unique housing challenges created by military mobility, including short-notice relocations, limited short-term rental options, housing deposits, difficulty transferring landlord references, and Basic Allowance for Housing levels that may not keep pace with local market costs. We have called for housing allowances that better reflect actual conditions and have stressed that housing instability can distract from mission focus and influence retention decisions.

DCUC has also supported the VA Home Loan Awareness Act, improved education about VA home-loan eligibility, more efficient appraisal and closing processes, and efforts to overcome misconceptions that disadvantage military and veteran borrowers. Defense credit unions provide specialized mortgage products, financial counseling, and local expertise to help military families secure stable housing and use the benefits they have earned.

Fraud prevention and financial security. Military spouses and families face distinctive fraud risks because of frequent moves, overseas addresses, deployments, family separations, caregiver arrangements, and publicly identifiable connections to military service. DCUC has urged Congress to strengthen real-time fraud-information sharing, modernize identity-verification systems, invest in targeted military financial-fraud education, and ensure that federal fraud policies account for military spouse circumstances.

Defense credit unions conduct on-base seminars, distribute targeted fraud alerts, monitor military-specific transaction patterns, intervene in suspicious payments, and cooperate with federal and military law enforcement. Many frontline fraud professionals at defense credit unions are themselves veterans or military spouses, giving them valuable cultural knowledge and an ability to recognize warning signs that other institutions may overlook. DCUC has also supported the bipartisan TRAPS Act and liability protections for institutions acting in good faith to stop or reverse suspected fraudulent payments.

Emergency assistance and protection during government funding disruptions. During shutdowns and other periods of interrupted federal pay, defense credit unions have provided emergency payroll advances, low- and no-interest bridge loans, payment deferrals, fee waivers, financial counseling, and other assistance to military households.

DCUC has urged Congress to guarantee uninterrupted pay for every uniformed service, improve advance coordination between federal agencies and military-serving financial institutions, expand emergency-savings and financial-resilience initiatives, and formally recognize defense credit unions as essential partners in national contingency planning. We have also asked policymakers to examine the consequences funding lapses impose on military spouses who are federal employees or who must absorb increased childcare, housing, healthcare, and household costs during periods of uncertainty.

Overseas and on-installation financial access. DCUC has long advocated for equitable credit union access on military installations, including remote and overseas locations where few institutions are willing or able to operate. At some installations, a defense credit union is the only on-site financial institution providing military families with affordable accounts, responsible credit, emergency assistance, financial counseling, and secure access to funds.

We have urged the Department to integrate credit union counselors into military financial-readiness programs, remove unnecessary barriers preventing on-base credit unions from offering free education, clarify Military Lending Act and Servicemembers Civil Relief Act requirements, improve the treatment of APO and FPO addresses, and create a formal advisory mechanism through which the Department, financial regulators, and military-serving institutions can coordinate policy.

DCUC has also defended military spouses and families living abroad from policies that could impose unintended financial costs. When Congress considered a new remittance tax, DCUC sought protections for servicemembers and their families, including lawful permanent-resident spouses transferring funds to deployed personnel, and requested clear verification standards and safe harbors for regulated institutions serving military communities.

Access to responsible credit and secure financial services. DCUC has opposed policies that could reduce affordable credit, weaken fraud protections, increase account fees, or undermine the financial infrastructure military families rely on during deployments and relocations. Card-program resources help finance around-the-clock digital access, fraud detection, emergency member support, financial education, and responsible products that help military households manage cash-flow disruptions.

These efforts demonstrate that DCUC's interest in the Commission is not theoretical or ceremonial. Our member credit unions are already addressing the very issues the Commission has been created to examine. They see where military families encounter barriers, how multiple pressures compound after a PCS move or deployment, and which interventions produce meaningful improvements.

Requested Commission Actions

DCUC respectfully recommends that the Department and Commission take the following steps:

1. **Establish a Financial Readiness Subcommittee.** Use the authority provided by the executive order to create a dedicated subcommittee examining the financial consequences of military spouse employment, PCS moves, childcare, housing, education, healthcare, deployment, fraud, and overseas service.
2. **Invite DCUC to participate as a subject-matter partner.** Include DCUC and representatives of defense credit unions in Commission meetings, listening sessions, subcommittees, data reviews, and policy-development activities.
3. **Integrate defense credit unions into installation-level planning.** Ensure on-base and military-serving credit unions are included in PCS preparation, deployment readiness, spouse outreach, fraud prevention, emergency-response planning, and transition-assistance programs.
4. **Develop measurable financial-readiness outcomes.** Evaluate military spouse employment continuity, PCS-related out-of-pocket costs, emergency savings, debt burdens, access to responsible credit, fraud losses, housing stability, and benefit utilization alongside traditional measures of morale, resilience, and retention.

5. **Create a permanent coordination mechanism.** Establish regular engagement among the Commission, the Office of the Under Secretary of War for Personnel and Readiness, military departments, federal financial regulators, DCUC, and financial institutions serving military installations.
6. **Pilot practical solutions.** Work with defense credit unions to test financial-readiness workshops, spouse entrepreneurship programs, PCS financial checklists, fraud-alert networks, digital financial tools, emergency-savings initiatives, and other programs capable of being scaled across the Department.

Secretary Hegseth, military spouses deserve more than recognition. They deserve policies that reduce the financial penalties associated with military service, protect their household stability, support their careers and businesses, and give them a meaningful voice in decisions affecting their families.

The Commission is scheduled to operate for two years unless extended. That makes early engagement essential. Establishing a financial readiness workstream and including trusted military financial institutions at the outset will help ensure the Commission's recommendations are practical, measurable, and capable of implementation.

DCUC is prepared to contribute immediately. We bring more than six decades of experience, direct access to credit union leaders serving installations around the world, established relationships throughout the military community, and a demonstrated commitment to improving the financial quality of life of service members and their families.

I respectfully request a meeting with you or your designated senior officials at the earliest practicable opportunity to discuss DCUC's participation and the establishment of financial readiness as a formal Commission priority. You can reach me on this or any issue at ahernandez@dcuc.org.

Thank you for your leadership, your support for military families, and your consideration of this request. DCUC and our member credit unions stand ready to help the Commission deliver lasting results for military spouses, strengthen military families, and advance the readiness of the force.

Sincerely,

ANTHONY R. HERNANDEZ, Colonel, USAF (Ret)
President & CEO
Defense Credit Union Council