

United States Senate

May 20, 2020

The Honorable Governor Jared Polis
State Capitol Building
200 East Colfax Avenue, Room 136
Denver, CO 80203

Dear Governor Polis:

We write to share a few updates with you on the analysis criteria and site selection process being conducted by the Department of the Air Force to determine the permanent headquarters for United States Space Command. We know you share our excitement regarding Colorado's selection as the provisional headquarters of U.S. Space Command, but all of us must continue working together to demonstrate to the Air Force that Colorado is the perfect place for the permanent headquarters of the critical mission.

On May 15, 2020, we spoke with Air Force Secretary Barbara Barrett regarding the Department's announcement to restart its basing process and the launch of a national competition for the selection of Space Command's headquarters location. According to the Air Force's letter to the Nation's Governors on May 14, in order for a community to be eligible, there must be three minimum screening criteria met: "(1) locations that have a population base that is within the top 150 largest Metropolitan Statistical Areas in the United States; (2) located within 25 miles of a military base; and (3) have a Livability Index score of 50 points out of 100 or higher as determined by the American Association of Retired Persons Public Policy Institution." The restart will also include additional screening and evaluation criteria on mission related factors, infrastructure capacity, community support, and costs to the Air Force.

Of note, Secretary Barrett shared that the "community support" evaluation criteria will primarily consider the quality of state public education systems (Pre-K-12) as well as state law and statute that enhance occupational licensure reciprocity for military spouses. According to a 2019 Blue Star Families Lifestyle national survey, 32 percent of military families lived apart due to their children's educational stability. We are confident that Colorado's school choice initiatives offer that stability for military families statewide. Furthermore, finances remain in the top five overall concerns of military families. Forty-eight percent of military spouses who responded to the Blue Star survey said unemployment was their top concern; the inability to reliably earn two incomes was also a stressor for 23 percent of service members and 36 percent of military spouses. We encourage you to keep Secretary Barrett's comments and these related statistics in mind as we prepare to provide our strongest arguments of why Colorado is best suited for U.S. Space Command's permanent headquarters.

Secretary of Defense Mark Esper has prioritized military spouse employment and licensure reciprocity as a key aspect of supporting service families by including it for consideration in the "community support" criteria for the U.S. Space Command basing decision. The Department of Defense (DoD) envisions routine consideration of this criteria for future mission basing decisions

across all military service branches. In February, DoD released a report titled “Military Spouse Licensure: State Best Practices and Strategies for Achieving Reciprocity.” The report outlines state best practices for facilitating licensure reciprocity for military spouses along with recommendations for state-level improvements. Also outlined are the criteria metrics that DoD has developed to assess military-friendly state licensing practices. According to 2019 DoD data, Colorado is one of seven states where military spouses represent over one percent of the licensed workforce.

Most of the evaluation criteria will be informed by federal data sources, however, the impact of state efforts meant to support military spouse licensure reciprocity will be scored based on current state laws, interstate compacts, military specific rules, and executive actions. Exceptions or restrictions that limit reciprocity for certain occupations will also be factored in the state’s overall score. Given the latest guidance from the Air Force and Secretary Esper’s prioritization of military spouse employment and licensure reciprocity, we ask for your consideration to ensure the state’s arguments in favor of the “community support” category are adequately portrayed in your endorsement of Colorado’s self-nomination.

Thank you for your continued support of the military men, women, spouses and children across Colorado who serve on behalf of our national defense. We look forward to continuing our strong advocacy to ensure Colorado is the permanent headquarters of U.S. Space Command.

Sincerely,



Michael F. Bennet
United States Senator



Cory Gardner
United States Senator