

**Chairman Richard Shelby Opening Statement  
Committee on Appropriations Subcommittee on Defense**

**Hearing to Review the FY2020 Budget Request for the Defense Health Program**

**April 3, 2019**

*(As prepared for delivery)*

Good morning, the Subcommittee will come to order.

I am pleased to welcome our distinguished panel to review the fiscal year 2020 budget request for the military health system and medical readiness of our servicemembers. Today the committee will hear from Vice Admiral Raquel Bono, Director of the Defense Health Agency; Lieutenant General Nadja West, Surgeon General of the Army; Vice Admiral Forrest Faison, Surgeon General of the Navy; Lieutenant General Dorothy Hogg, Surgeon General of the Air Force; and Ms. Stacy Cummings, Program Executive Officer of the Defense Healthcare Management Systems.

As this Committee reviews the Department's Fiscal year 2020 request for funding, we acknowledge that our country expects our Military Health System to competently deliver medical care to service members while in theater and also provide healthcare to active duty and retired U.S. military personnel and their families.

More than 125,000 medical professionals are engaged in the work to ensure those in uniform are medically ready to deploy and provide healthcare to 9.6 million beneficiaries around the world. This is no small undertaking.

At the same time, the Committee recently learned that the Department of Defense plans to reduce its uniformed military health personnel over the next few years. We expect to hear more about your analysis behind these cuts in your testimony today.

In addition, the Committee understands that the goal of the new electronic health record system (MHS Genesis) is to provide a single, integrated electronic health record for service members, veterans, and their families.

The Genesis system has been deployed for over a year now at four sites in the Pacific Northwest and the Department is preparing to introduce the system to more sites this fall.

We expect that you will keep this committee informed of the lessons learned and improvements to the technology and training that will be implemented in this next round to avoid some of the issues identified in the initial implementation.

Now I turn to the Vice Chairman, Senator Durbin, for his opening remarks. Thank you.

###