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United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510-3205

April 29, 2014

Secretary Jessica L. Wright
Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness
United States Department of Defense
1000 Defense Pentagon
Washington, DC 20301-1000

Dear Secretary Wright,

Since 1988 the Defense Manpower Data Center (DMDC) has conducted surveys of gender issues for active duty military members, including the 2012 Workplace and Gender Relations Survey of Active Duty Members (WGRA) in order to assess the prevalence of sexual assault and sexual harassment in the active duty Armed Forces. I am concerned about the recent decision to have the RAND Corporation conduct the 2014 WGRA, and the impact this change will have on the ability to track progress in preventing and responding to sexual assault in the Armed Forces.

In order to determine the impact of this decision, I am requesting an explanation for why the Department of Defense (DOD) has chosen to contract with the RAND Corporation to carry out the 2014 WGRA rather than continue to work with the DMDC. I am also requesting a detailed description of the proposed survey methodology and any changes from the execution of the 2012 WGRA, including sampling design and selection, survey distribution, weighting techniques, survey questions, and the definition of sexual harassment and unwanted gender-related behaviors. If there are proposed changes, I would like to know the justification for and implications of the revisions.

Changes to methodology, definitions or survey questions will preclude comparison to previous years, hiding any progress the Armed Forces may have made. Of particular concern is a possible change in the definition of unwanted sexual contact. Since 2006, the WGRA has defined unwanted sexual conduct as "intentional sexual contact that was against a person's will or which occurred when the person did not or could not consent, and includes completed or attempted sexual intercourse, sodomy (oral or anal sex), penetration by an object, and the unwanted touching of genitalia and other sexually-related areas of the body." According to the DMDC, this definition was developed with the assistance of DOD's own legal counsel in order to reflect the range of Articles 120 and 125 offenses to a lay audience. Altering this core definition will make it impossible to determine whether the data accurately reflects the impact of the new policies and procedures instituted by the Armed Forces.

I look forward to your response.

Sincerely,



Kirsten Gillibrand
United States Senator