

SENATE COMMITTEE ON COMMERCE, SCIENCE, AND TRANSPORTATION
“Nomination of Admiral Linda L. Fagan, to be Commandant of the United States Coast Guard”

10:15 AM, April 28, 2022

Questions for the Record from Chair Cantwell to Admiral Linda L. Fagan

Base Seattle Child Development Center. I am pleased that Seattle was named as the homeport of the three new Polar Security Cutters. With the increase in personnel from these new ships also comes a higher need in support services such as childcare. A 2019 RAND Corporation study titled, “Why Do Women Leave the Coast Guard, and What Can Be Done to Encourage Them to Stay?” found that women leave the Coast Guard at a higher rate and at an earlier point in their career than men. Access to finding quality, affordable childcare was cited as a primary reason for this trend. These support services are critical to retain a diverse and talented workforce needed by the Coast Guard to carry out their critical missions of saving lives, enforcing laws, and safeguarding maritime commerce.

Question1: Admiral Fagan, I have heard from Coast Guard families in Puget Sound about the challenges of finding childcare. These challenges will only grow with more cutters being stationed there. Admiral Schultz committed to construct a Child Development Center at base Seattle. Will you commit to me that the Coast Guard will construct a Child Development Center to serve families stationed in Seattle?

Response: Once the Coast Guard is able to finalize its ongoing expansion of the force laydown in Seattle, I can commit to building a Child Development Center in the Seattle area. This will be a critical component of my intent to provide the best support for our service members and their families stationed in Washington and everywhere the Coast Guard workforce serves. As I described at the hearing, we must balance organic childcare capability with other options like subsidies, and expanding authorities to cover in-home care (e.g., au pairs and nannies), this is especially true in major metropolitan areas where the Coast Guard’s workforce is geographically dispersed.

Question2: The Coast Guard has three ways to help their members with childcare including a subsidy program, childcare care centers at large bases, and Family Childcare Centers. While you have invested in the first two options significantly, what more can you do to incentivize the development of Family Childcare Centers?

Response: I appreciate Congress’s continued support for the Coast Guard workforce and their families. The \$4 million increase provided in the FY 2022 Appropriation for childcare fee assistance helps to defray the rising costs our families are facing; however in terms of childcare there is not a one-size-fits-all solution. As you know, the Coast Guard’s workforce is geographically dispersed, which requires childcare solutions other than CDCs in areas with high concentrations of Coast Guard personnel. In regards to Family Childcare Centers (FCCs), assisting Coast Guard spouses with daycare business start-up costs would eliminate a potential barrier to entry and help incentivize FCC providers. Expanding fee assistance authorities to include full-time in-home childcare provides another option for service members, particularly for

those serving in locations without CDCs or Coast Guard housing (required for FCCs). I look forward to working with you and your staff as we continue to explore better ways to support the Coast Guard's greatest resource, our people.

Southern resident orcas. Orcas are extremely important ecologically and culturally to the Pacific Northwest and the state of Washington. Southern resident orcas are endangered with only 74 animals left in the population. The population is under stress due to many factors including vessel strikes and noise. In the 2020 Elijah E. Cummings Coast Guard Authorization Act, the Coast Guard was directed to submit a report and action plan in consultation with the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration related to Southern resident orca vessel buffer zones. The report submitted to Congress did not address the Coast Guard's efforts in relation to Quiet Sound, coordination with Canada, or how it was working with the National Oceanic Atmospheric Administration to reduce vessel noise on Southern resident orcas. In addition, the Coast Guard has chosen to attend Quiet Sound meetings in an advisory role but has failed to contribute to discussion.

Question 1: Admiral Fagan, the Canadian Coast Guard has established a whale desk to reduce vessel strikes and noise impacts to Orcas. Will you commit to work with me to setup a similar system in the Puget Sound?

Response: I am fully committed to the protection of marine habitats, marine mammals, and endangered species and I look forward to engaging more with the Committee, Coast Guard operational commanders, and other federal, state, local, and Tribal stakeholders on any legislation pertaining to Southern Resident Orcas. The Coast Guard's ongoing work with interagency and international partners on conservation and enforcement is a top priority and I am open to evaluating additional measures to safeguard these endangered marine mammals.

Question 2: NOAA, the Port of Seattle, the Makah Tribe, the Washington State Department of Fish and Wildlife and other federal and state agencies are working together through the Quiet Sound initiative to reduce vessel impacts to orcas. Unfortunately, the Coast Guard is the only Federal agency that participates in an advisory role. This means the Coast Guard often sits silently in meetings, even when asked for feedback. Will you commit to elevating the Coast Guard's participation by ensuring that the Coast Guard meaningfully contributes to the Quiet Sound Program? Will you ensure any Coast Guard representative participating has decision-making authority and is able to contribute to discussion?

Response: I am committed to continued, active Coast Guard participation in the Quiet Sound initiative. Our goal is to provide navigational safety and maritime law enforcement expertise, maritime traffic data, and communication tools to reduce impacts on Southern Resident Orcas. Through the recently launched operational working groups, I am confident the Coast Guard's role will increase. I know the local leadership from Sector Puget Sound and District 13 eagerly await the next leadership meeting in July, 2022.

Questions for the Record from Senator Sinema to Admiral Linda L. Fagan

Arctic and Icebreakers. As you are aware, Russia has over 40 icebreakers in its Arctic fleet, including nine nuclear-powered icebreakers. In light of Russia's illegal and unprovoked invasion of Ukraine, we must ensure our defenses are prepared for possible hostile actions by the Russian military. The United States currently has two icebreakers in operation and both have been in service for decades, and only one of those ships is a heavy-duty polar icebreaker. Congress has taken steps to allocate funding towards the construction of the Polar Security Cutter class of ships over the past several years.

Question 1. Could you provide an update on the Polar Security Cutter program? Will you prioritize ensuring the Coast Guard has the ability to counter potential Russian aggression in the Arctic Ocean?

Response: The Polar Security Cutter (PSC) is one of the Coast Guard's top acquisition priorities, and is vital to project U.S. sovereignty in the Arctic and protect U.S. interests in the Antarctic. The Contract Delivery Date for the first PSC remains May 2025. While we anticipate that the start of construction may be delayed until the second quarter of FY 2023, it is premature at this point to definitize a correlating delivery delay, as the Coast Guard has not granted contractual schedule relief. I am committed to working closely with Halter Marine to reduce program risk and deliver this capability to the Nation at best speed.

Sexual Assault within the Coast Guard. I have concerns about the increase in reported sexual assault allegations year over year from fiscal year 2019 to fiscal year 2020 within the Coast Guard's ranks. The U.S. Coast Guard Academy has also faced challenges with sexual assault and harassment, with the Command Master Chief of the Academy relieved of his duties for inappropriate conduct.

Question 2. What steps will you take to ensure that sexual misconduct allegations within the Coast Guard are taken seriously and properly adjudicated? Will you also commit to producing sexual assault and harassment reports in a timely manner? What resources does the Coast Guard make available to survivors of assault or harassment, even after their tenure with the Coast Guard has concluded, and will the Coast Guard take steps to expand the availability of such services?

Response: Sexual assault is a crime and not tolerated in the Coast Guard. If Confirmed, I will ensure the Service continues training programs, follows policies to protect victims, and has robust processes for reporting crimes such as sexual assault. The Coast Guard is working to release our annual report to Congress on sexual assault at the beginning of September, 2022. While this is the first year we will release our report at the same time as the other Armed Services, I am committed to doing so moving forward. In August 2021, the Coast Guard expanded access to Sexual Assault Prevention Response and Recovery (SAPRR) services, to include Coast Guard civilians and all former members of the Coast Guard who were sexually assaulted while serving on active or reserve duty. Civilians and former members now have the option to meet with a Sexual Assault Response Coordinator (SARC) or Victim Advocate (VA) to

receive information, discuss reporting options, and receive referrals for care. If Confirmed, I will seek ways to expand the availability of these critical support services.

Diversity at the Coast Guard Academy. At present, minority groups are underrepresented in the cadet population at the Coast Guard Academy, particularly among Native American cadets.

Question 3. Does the Coast Guard have any plans to conduct outreach among Arizona's 22 federally recognized tribes to find qualified candidates to expand minority representation? Has the Coast Guard's College Student Pre-Commissioning Initiative sent any recruiters to tribal colleges and universities located in Arizona?

Response: As I laid out in the hearing last week, I am committed to the Coast Guard workforce. That includes continuing to improve the diversity and inclusion at every level of the Service. While I cannot speak definitively on Arizona's tribal colleges and universities being recognized as Minority Serving Institutions, I can tell you that the Coast Guard recently formed a dedicated Officer Recruiting Corps focused on recruiting at Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) and other MSIs. I have directed my staff to update me on the MSI status of tribal colleges and universities and look forward to working with you to ensure we do not miss any opportunity to recruit, train, and retain a diverse workforce and grow the Coast Guard's Recruiting Corps to access new markets and talent.

Childcare Programs. A 2019 RAND Corporation study suggests that improving access to childcare would help address the issue of female attrition within the Coast Guard. The Coast Guard operates nine child development centers at its largest bases and also offers subsidies to service members to offset the cost of private sector childcare services. The president's fiscal year 2023 budget provides \$17 million to the subsidy program, which was the same funding level for fiscal year 2022. Meanwhile, the *Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act* provided \$120 million to the Coast Guard to construct four new child development centers and expand two existing centers.

Question 4. Do you think the Coast Guard should continue to prioritize the child care subsidy program?

Response: Yes, if confirmed, I will continue to look for opportunities to help Coast Guard families. As I described in the hearing, we must balance organic childcare capability with other service options like subsidies, and expanded authorities to cover in-home care (e.g. au pairs and nannies). I look forward to working with you and your staff as we continue to explore better ways to support the Coast Guard's greatest resource, our people.

Question 5. What other steps should Congress consider to address the issue of affordable, quality childcare for Coast Guard families?

Response: I appreciate Congress's continued support for the Coast Guard workforce and their families. The \$4 million increase provided in the FY 2022 Appropriation for childcare fee assistance helps to defray the rising costs of childcare our families are facing; however in terms

of childcare there is not a one-size-fits-all solution. Building Child Development Centers (CDCs) are critical to providing the support our service members and their families need. However, the Coast Guard's workforce is geographically dispersed, which requires childcare solutions other than CDCs in areas with high concentrations of Coast Guard personnel. In addition to building more CDCs and expanding childcare subsidies, the Service needs additional fee assistance authorities for full-time in-home childcare. Growing the number of Family Childcare Centers (FCCs) is also a priority and assisting Coast Guard spouses with daycare business start-up costs would eliminate a potential barrier to entry and help incentivize FCC providers.

Indo-Pacific. The Coast Guard plays a critical role in ensuring a free and open Indo-Pacific and combatting unlawful Chinese activities and claims in the region.

Question 6. Can you provide an update on the Coast Guard's efforts to respond to China's "maritime militia" and its failure to prevent unregulated fishing in global waters? What steps will you take to further strengthen the Coast Guard's engagement with affected nations to counter this threat?

Response: The Coast Guard has an enduring and specialized role in Oceania and the greater Indo-Pacific to preserve the free-flow of commerce, protect natural resources, and enhance regional stability. The FY 2023 President's Budget expands the Coast Guard's capacity to conduct operations, engage in maritime governance activities, and participate in regional efforts to increase partner nation proficiency, self-sustainment, and local expertise in maritime security operations. I am committed to strengthening the Coast Guard's efforts in the Indo-Pacific and countering the threats of Illegal, Unreported, and Unregulated Fishing, which has replaced piracy as the leading global maritime security threat. If confirmed, I will continue to look for opportunities to support the White House Indo-Pacific Strategy and work collaboratively with our partners and allies.

Questions for the Record from Senator Blumenthal to Admiral Linda L. Fagan

Parenthood ban at the Coast Guard Academy. Currently, cadets with parental obligations cannot enroll in the Coast Guard Academy, and cadets who become parents while enrolled will be expelled unless they give up their parental rights. The Fiscal Year 2022 NDAA directs the Secretary of Defense to develop policy that includes the option to preserve parental guardianship rights of cadets and midshipmen, but it omits the Coast Guard Academy from the academies covered. No person should be denied entrance to or be forced to leave the Coast Guard Academy on the basis of parental obligations.

Question: *Will you work with the Coast Guard Academy Superintendent to develop policies that allow Coast Guard Academy cadets with parental obligations to enroll in or remain enrolled at the Academy? If not, please explain why you think this policy is necessary to maintain going forward.*

Answer: As noted, Section 559A of the FY 2022 National Defense Authorization Act does not directly apply to the Coast Guard Academy. However, I am committed to collaborating with our fellow military service academies to develop these policies that maintain appropriate parity with the DoD services.