

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510-3205

June 20, 2024

The Honorable Lloyd J. Austin III
Secretary of Defense
Department of Defense
1000 Defense Pentagon
Washington, DC 20301

The Honorable Frank Kendall III
Secretary of the Air Force
Department of Defense
1670 Air Force Pentagon
Washington, DC 20330

Dear Secretary Austin and Secretary Kendall:

We write to request the Department of Defense (DoD) to establish an Air Force Reserve Officers' Training Corps (AFROTC) detachment at the University of Colorado, Colorado Springs (UCCS). Despite Colorado Springs and the surrounding area being home to Schriever Space Force Base, U.S. Space Command, Peterson Space Force Base, the United States Air Force Academy, and the Cheyenne Mountain Space Force Complex, Colorado Springs does not have an AFROTC unit. This is a missed opportunity for the Air Force to recruit students from a thriving military and veteran community and create a strong student-to-active-duty pipeline to support current DoD workforce needs.

We recognize that the DoD has experienced challenges reaching recruitment goals across all military branches. As an example, the Air Force is experiencing a 1500 billet pilot shortage. The establishment of the Space Force, the newest and smallest branch of the military, necessitates increased recruitment opportunities and resources, which a new AFROTC would help provide. Colorado Springs, in partnership with UCCS, is uniquely qualified to support new recruitment objectives, as it is one out of 2 cities nationwide with two combatant commands and four military installations. Proximity to four Air Force and Space Force installations in Colorado Springs has increased interest across Colorado Springs in joining the military.

Currently, students from UCCS, Colorado College, Colorado State University Pueblo (CSU Pueblo), Pikes Peak State College, and other Southern Colorado colleges who join AFROTC are required to attend classes at the University of Colorado, Boulder under a crosstown agreement with AFROTC detachment 105. This entails a 100-mile, two-hour drive to and from Colorado Springs, a journey that is both a deterrent and a burden for participating students. This commute exceeds the Air Force's own 90-minute commute rule. As a result, the current UCCS cohort is limited to 39 cadets, despite the success of three cadets commissioned into the Space Force from the 2023 graduating class.

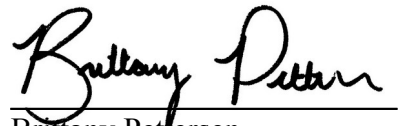
In the 2019-2020 academic year, UCCS hosted a one-year AFROTC satellite program with detachment 105. That year, nearly 100 AFROTC cadets joined the AFROTC program before enrollment was capped due to capacity constraints. We are confident that an AFROTC detachment established at UCCS would boast 100 cadets within the first year and maintain 100-120 cadets in future academic years. A standalone detachment at UCCS could become one of the strongest units in the country and would provide diversity to the officer corps. This program would not be limited to UCCS as we intend to take advantage of crosstown agreements with other rural Southern Colorado colleges.

We implore you to join us in creating a direct military workforce pipeline, utilizing the unique assets across our state, and specifically in Colorado Springs, to fortify our nation's national security and help bridge the military recruitment gap. We look forward to working with you on how we can accomplish this goal together.

Sincerely,



Michael F. Bennet
United States Senator



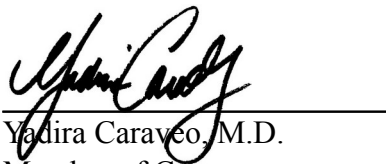
Brittany Pettersen
Member of Congress



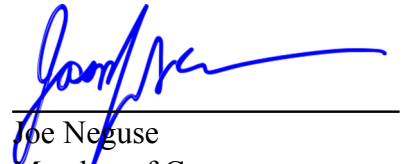
Jason Crow
Member of Congress



John Hickenlooper
United States Senator



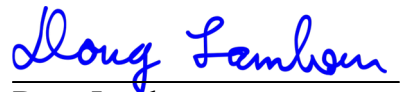
Yadira Caraveo, M.D.
Member of Congress



Joe Neguse
Member of Congress



Diana DeGette
Member of Congress



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Member of Congress

