

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

July 31, 2020

The Honorable Mark T. Esper
Secretary of Defense
1000 Defense Pentagon
Room 3E880
Washington, D.C. 20301

Dear Secretary Esper:

We are pleased to support the two Defense Community Infrastructure Program (DCIP) projects submitted on behalf of the community, soldiers and families at Fort Polk, Louisiana. As you know, the Army launched a major quality of life initiative in December 2019 that focuses on three installations, including Fort Polk. The Army's objective is to make each of these installations an "installation of choice" for Army soldiers and families. We applaud the Army for conducting this initiative and for prioritizing Combat Training Centers, and we believe Fort Polk's two DCIP projects align with the Army's ongoing quality of life initiative.

The FY19 National Defense Authorization Act authorized the DCIP to improve the physical condition and quality of life in the communities around military installations. Your department specifically stressed the importance of quality of life initiatives as you developed the guidance for DCIP selection. That objective is similarly important to Fort Polk and is a motivation for these two projects.

The first proposed project addresses the limited consumer options leading into Fort Polk, which are hamstrung by a lack of sufficient infrastructure systems including public access, sanitation, sewage, and lighting. The proposed *Fort Polk Entrance Road: Home of Heroes Trail District* addresses such issues and will dramatically increase military and family quality of life along a development corridor approximately 2.2 miles in length. DCIP-funded improvements will encourage business investments in desirable dining, hotels, banking, childcare facilities, and others.

The second DCIP project, entitled *Campus Connections and Learning Spaces*, directly funds educational improvements that will result in a higher quality of life by expanding learning opportunities, engaging military families, and providing for the conditions that promote student success. *Campus Connections* will include more learning space in the form of a technology center, two outdoor classrooms at Leesville Junior High School, one age appropriate learning facility at Pickering Elementary, and spaces to conduct science, technology, engineering, arts, and mathematics (STEAM) education.

The Fort Polk defense community, the State, and the Delegation appreciate your support for our nation's defense communities by enabling them, via programs like DCIP, to improve the services they provide to our warfighters and their families. Fort Polk is focused on initiatives and opportunities to improve conditions on and off the post, including the quality of education,

housing, employment and licensure flexibility. We believe the spirit and intent of DCIP is clearly aligned to a small rural defense community, like the one supporting Fort Polk, that is 100% committed to the mission at Fort Polk.

Thank you for your service to the nation.

Sincerely,



Bill Cassidy, M.D.
United States Senator



John Kennedy
United States Senator



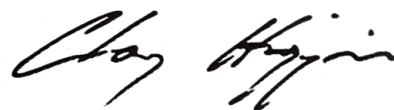
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Member of Congress



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Member of Congress



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CC:

The Honorable Ellen Lord
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