

CONGRESSWOMAN  
CHELLIE PINGREE

1ST DISTRICT  
MAINE



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SUBCOMMITTEE ON SEAPOWERS AND  
EXPEDITIONARY FORCES

CONGRESS OF THE UNITED STATES  
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

January 10, 2012

The Honorable James Clapper  
Director of National Intelligence  
Washington, DC, 20511

Dear Mr. Clapper,

I appreciate your December 7, 2011, response to my inquiry regarding Question 21 of the Security Form 86 as it relates to victims of military sexual trauma (MST). I have also received correspondence dated January 5, 2012, from Under Secretary of Defense Michael G. Vickers concerning this issue.

It would appear that the Department of Defense (DOD) does not believe any changes to Q21 are necessary in the context of military sexual trauma (MST) and that current mechanisms exist to prevent any inequity to MST victims. I strongly disagree with that sentiment. Under Secretary Vickers writes that protections in the SF 86 medical release form limit the questions investigators may ask health care practitioners regarding mental health counseling. If an MST victim answers "yes" to Q21, health care providers are then asked if the counseling is relevant to the adjudication for eligibility for access to classified information or a sensitive national security position. If the practitioner answers "no" to this question, no further questions are authorized.

This argument merely highlights the reason I requested the change to Q21 because current procedure creates an inequity for victims of MST who received mental health counseling and reported such counseling. As you know, since 2008, at the request of the DOD, combat veterans who received mental health counseling as a result of combat stress are allowed to answer "no" to Q21—therefore the investigators are not required nor authorized to follow up with the service members' mental health practitioner. This same treatment should be afforded to victims of MST who have sought counseling because of their assault.

Again, I respectfully urge you to change Q21 to allow MST victims who have sought mental health counseling as a result of the sexual assault to be allowed to answer "no" to Q21. I look forward to your response on this important issue.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Chellie R".

Chellie Pingree  
Member of Congress

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