

**Congress of the United States**  
**Washington, DC 20515**

February 1, 2013

The Honorable James Clapper  
Director of National Intelligence

The Honorable Jeffrey Zients  
Deputy Director, Office of Management and Budget

The Honorable John Berry  
Director, Office of Personnel Management

Dear General Clapper, Mr. Zients and Mr. Berry,

Thank you for your service and dedication to U.S. national security. We write to you to again address our concerns with the requirement to report treatment or counseling for sexual assault in response to Question 21 of the SF-86.

We believe that individuals dealing with post traumatic stress disorder and military sexual trauma (MST) should be encouraged to get counseling and treatment. Unfortunately, our offices consistently hear from individuals who suffer from MST who choose not to seek counseling because question 21 on the security clearance form SF-86 requires disclosure of mental health counseling and they fear they will be denied a security clearance if they disclose this counseling.

As you know, in 2008, at the strong request of the Department of Defense (DOD), the policy was changed to allow combat veterans who sought mental health counseling because of combat stress to answer "No" to question 21 on SF-86. At that time, DOD stated, "Seeking professional care for these mental health issues should not be perceived to jeopardize an individual's security clearance. On the contrary, failure to seek care actually increases the likelihood that psychological distress could escalate to a more serious mental condition, which could preclude an individual from performing sensitive duties." We applaud that policy change, and continue to hope that similar modifications can be made for victims of MST.

We have communicated with your agencies on multiple occasions to request that individuals who experienced MST, who were also injured in the course of duty, be permitted to answer "No" to question 21. We were pleased to learn that there is an effort to provide relief to these individuals by the issuance of interim guidance that would allow them to answer "No" to question 21 of SF-86 if the counseling they have or will seek is directly related to sexual assault. Our offices continue to be contacted by many service members and veterans requesting this guidance be issued as soon as possible, as many of them have stated they will not seek counseling until this change has taken place for fear of losing their ability to obtain a new or renewed security clearance. It is for these reasons that we request you expeditiously issue interim guidance that provides relief to victims of military sexual assault who are seeking a security clearance.

We look forward to hearing from you on this important matter.

Sincerely,



Chellie Pingree  
Member of Congress



Niki Tsongas  
Member of Congress