

March 31, 2020

Dr. Mark Esper
Secretary of Defense
100 Defense Pentagon
Washington, DC 20301-1000

Dr. Esper:

As the home to our nation's military installations, the 300 plus communities, regions and states that comprise the Association of Defense Communities support your efforts to balance the need for transparency with the operational security imperative of the military. While maintaining this balance is important, the fact is more than 70% of our service members live off base; our installations and military families rely on the people and services of the surrounding community. **COVID-19 does not recognize fence lines, our response requires a "one community" approach that links bases and communities to manage response and recovery.**

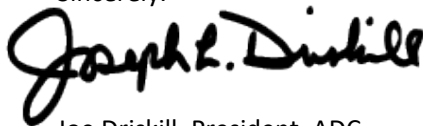
A "one community" approach encourages a joint base-community response structure that will develop local strategies to promote health and safety, ensure family resilience and begin to think about what it will take to recover from this crisis. **While many of our local members are actively engaging with their installations, your direct guidance to base commanders to embrace a "one community" approach would ensure collaboration is occurring nationwide.**

This is not a new idea. Bases and communities have been collaborating for more than a decade through the military's community partnership programs and the intergovernmental support agreement authority. The strength of this collaboration at hundreds of bases that exist today will provide a strong foundation to advance this important mission. At a national level, we are ready to support this effort and make sure all communities, regions and states are ready to actively engage.

In addition to this, ADC, Blue Star Families, and participants of the White Oak Collaborative have joined forces to create the COVID-19 Military Support Initiative (CMSI), a national platform for sharing information, maintaining engagement, developing promising best practices and providing policy approaches to support communities, states and military families through this crisis. Every week, we have thousands of community and state leaders, uniformed and civilian installation leaders, military families, and supporting industry partners gathering on virtual town halls to share information about this crisis. **We invite you to join us in the coming weeks to engage with this important audience and encourage the collaboration we feel is critical to meeting the challenge of this pandemic.**

We are one community and your ready partner as we work together to navigate this unprecedented crisis and the resilience we will need to recover.

Sincerely,



Joe Driskill, President, ADC