



## COMMONWEALTH of VIRGINIA

June 28, 2022

The Honorable Lloyd J. Austin III  
Secretary of Defense  
1000 Defense Pentagon  
Washington, D.C. 20301-1000

Dear Secretary Austin,

We strongly urge you to indefinitely postpone the implementation of your August 24, 2021 directive, outlined in your memorandum *Mandatory Coronavirus Disease 2019 Vaccination of Department of Defense Service Members*. At this time, this directive is not consistent with the latest science, is not in the best interest of Guard readiness, and is subject to significant legal challenges.

Our knowledge of the COVID-19 virus has increased dramatically since you issued your directive. Public health experts, including the Centers for Disease Control, acknowledge that natural immunity provides substantially similar protections to the vaccines. Further, there are significant increases in the efficacy of therapeutics and the severity of subsequent COVID-19 variants is waning dramatically. States and businesses have largely dropped mask and vaccines mandates, and likewise, federal agencies such as the FAA no longer require vaccines or masks.

Additionally, this directive will unnecessarily impact troop readiness, at a time when the Virginia National Guard has substantial deployments and as our nation enters hurricane season. These guardsmen deserve the opportunity to continue to serve, and we need them.

Finally, several states are in litigation in federal courts and these legal challenges must be fully resolved before your directive is implemented. At a minimum, the July 1 deadline should be extended pending the federal litigation.

In conclusion, we know you share our great appreciation and respect for the brave men and women of our National Guard. Their service and sacrifice reflect their commitment to our country and the principles embodied in our nation. A select number of them have made a decision not to get vaccinated and whether that decision is based on sincerely held religious beliefs, their own

medical choices, or another matter of conscience, our nation should respect and accommodate it. We respectfully and strongly urge you to reconsider and postpone this directive.

Sincerely,



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Glenn Youngkin  
Governor of Virginia



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Rob Wittman  
Member of Congress



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H. Morgan Griffith  
Member of Congress



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Ben Cline  
Member of Congress



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Bob Good  
Member of Congress