

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

September 07, 2016

The Honorable Thad Cochran  
Chairman  
Senate Committee on Appropriations  
Subcommittee on Defense  
S-128, The Capitol  
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Rodney Frelinghuysen  
Chairman  
House Committee on Appropriations  
Subcommittee on Defense  
H-405, The Capitol  
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Dick Durbin  
Ranking Member  
Senate Committee on Appropriations  
Subcommittee on Defense  
115 Dirksen Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Pete Visclosky  
Ranking Member  
House Committee on Appropriations  
Subcommittee on Defense  
1016 Longworth House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Cochran, Ranking Member Durbin, Chairman Frelinghuysen, and Ranking Member Visclosky:

The Military Bands of the United States Armed Forces are an integral part of our country's musical and military excellence. Linking servicemen and servicewomen to those whom they protect, these musicians are emissaries to communities across the nation and throughout the world. We urge you to preclude any language from the final Fiscal Year 2017 Defense Appropriations Bill that diminishes their ability to continue serving our nation.

As described by the mission statement of the U.S. Army Band, military musicians "instill in our soldiers the will to fight and win, foster the support of our citizens, and promote our national interests at home and abroad." We believe the outreach provided by the members of these ensembles, through thousands of performances per year and music education programs in schools across the country, is more important than ever.

In addition to boosting the morale of our servicemembers and promoting national interests, military music ensembles also serve certain critical tactical roles in the field. For example, according to Army doctrine, "a band is routinely placed [under the command of the] provost marshal. The provost marshal may assign personnel to provide security to the division command posts, augment the military police response forces as a dismounted infantry platoon, or operate a holding area for enemy prisoners of war."

More than one hundred military music ensembles perform across the United States every year, sharing their music for free with the American public in nursing homes, parades, festivals, and other gatherings. During the summer, these concerts also occur on a weekly basis at the base of the West Steps of the United States Capitol, a continuation of a 130 year-old tradition with

bands performing American classics for visitors and tourists from around the world. In total, these performances reach more than 1 billion people annually.

Some of the most iconic American musicians, including Glenn Miller, Artie Shaw, and John Coltrane, have served in military bands, cementing the legacies of their respective ensembles as American traditions. Today, military musicians are among the most talented, accomplished, and respected in the United States. In choosing to perform in uniform, they exemplify service as emissaries of the Armed Forces. We should be doing everything we can to promote and support the ensembles they are part of.

Prioritizing the needs of the Department of Defense (DOD) should not come at the expense of our valued military ensembles. We trust the judgement of the Commanding Officers of these important units and urge you to preclude any language from the final FY 2017 Defense Appropriations Bill that diminishes their ability to continue serving our nation.

“America means freedom and there's no expression of freedom quite so sincere as music.”

– Maj. Glenn Miller, Army Air Forces Band '42-'44.

Sincerely,



Alcee L. Hastings  
Member of Congress



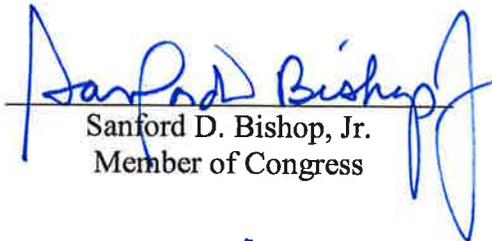
Walter B. Jones  
Member of Congress



Tim Walz  
Member of Congress



Louise M. Slaughter  
Member of Congress



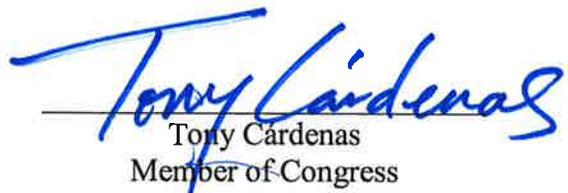
Sanford D. Bishop, Jr.  
Member of Congress



Donald Payne Jr.  
Member of Congress



Corrine Brown  
Member of Congress



Tony Cardenas  
Member of Congress

*Ted W. Lieu*

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Ted Lieu  
Member of Congress

*Gregory W. Meeks*

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Gregory W. Meeks  
Member of Congress

*Eddie Bernice Johnson*

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Eddie Bernice Johnson  
Member of Congress