



MANPOWER AND
RESERVE AFFAIRS

**OFFICE OF THE ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF DEFENSE
1500 DEFENSE PENTAGON
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20301-1500**

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**Michigan Legislature
Michigan House of Representatives
Military, Veterans and Homeland Security
P.O. Box 30014
Lansing, MI 48909**

Honorable Jennifer Conlin

**Remarks of
Shane Preston
Great Lakes Region
United States Department of Defense-State Liaison Office**

Madam Chair and honorable members of the Committee, the Department of Defense is grateful for the opportunity to support the policies reflected in SB 690. Our service members hold a crucial role in protecting the interests of the United States both at home and abroad and ensuring our overall national security. Through the implementation of interpersonal violence policies at the state and local level, we can empower victims, deter offenders, and create an environment for military families that enhances both resilience and readiness.

My name is Shane Preston. I am the Great Lakes Region Liaison at the United States Department of Defense-State Liaison Office, operating under the direction of Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness. We represent the Department and establish relationships with state leaders across the country who are concerned for troops and their families' welfare by harmonizing state and federal law and regulation on policy problems of national significance. These are identified by the Office of the Secretary of Defense, the Military Departments, and the National Guard Bureau as areas where states can play a crucial role.

In 2021, President Biden directed a 90-Day Independent Review Commission (IRC) to address sexual assault and harassment amongst the force. In its final report, the IRC made four recommendations in the areas of accountability, prevention, climate, and culture.¹ Additionally, the IRC dedicated nearly one third of its recommendations to the expansion of services to victims.² Interpersonal violence can be defined as any behavior that asserts power or control over

¹ U.S. Department of Defense (n.d.). *Independent Review Commission on Sexual Assault in the Military*. Retrieved December 12, 2023, from <https://www.defense.gov/Spotlights/Independent-Review-Commission-on-Sexual-Assault-in-the-Military/>

² U.S. Department of Defense. *Hard Truths and the Duty to Change: Recommendations from the Independent Review Commission on Sexual Assault in the Military*. Arlington, VA. Government Printing Office; 2021.

another person, and various forms of abuse to include psychological, emotional, verbal, physical, sexual or economic. While the Department of Defense has led the implementation of enterprise-wide guidance regarding the overall prevention of sexual assault and prevention, interpersonal violence is a term that is intentionally broad to capture the continuum of harm that may precede sexual assault, domestic violence, abuse, and harassment.

Interpersonal violence extends well beyond an individual victim, as the effects of violence directly impact our service members, their families, the units to which they are assigned, and our greater national security. The Department of Defense is committed to a coordinated community response regarding reports of violence, and there are several ways a state may implement statutory changes on the local level, many of which are reflected in SB 690.

In conclusion, SB 690 offers a framework to combat various forms of abuse and harassment that the Department of Defense has worked to improve upon since the Independent Review Commission made their recommendations. The state's role in helping to ensure these changes can be implemented nation-wide with some sense of uniformity for victims is critical to the enhancement of the safety, financial security, and physical and emotional well-being of military service members and their family members. These policy changes will also enhance the resiliency and readiness of our force.

We thank the Committee for considering this important legislation, and are especially grateful for the tremendous efforts Michigan has historically made in supporting our service members and their families. We also thank the bill sponsor, Sen. Klinefelt, for her introduction of this important legislation.

Sincerely,

Shane Preston

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Great Lakes Region
Defense-State Liaison Office