Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

November 16, 2026

The Honorable Mike Rogers
Chairman
House Committee on Armed Services
2216 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Adam Smith
Ranking Member
House Committee on Armed Services
2216 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Roger Wicker
Chairman
Senate Committee on Armed Services
228 Russell Senate Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Jack Reed
Ranking Member
Senate Committee on Armed Services
228 Russell Senate Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairmen Rogers and Wicker, Ranking Members Smith and Reed,

As members of the Congressional Jewish Caucus, we write to urge the House and Senate Armed Services Committees not to include provisions of the Military Chaplains Modernization Act of 2026 that could result in unwanted proselytization and infringe upon service members' religious freedom in the final Fiscal Year 2027 National Defense Authorization Act. We share concerns of many former military chaplains, community faith leaders, veterans' groups, and civil rights organizations regarding these provisions.

Military chaplains provide essential pastoral care and counseling to service members of many faiths and traditions, as well as those who do not practice any specific religion. Because chaplains serve a richly diverse military community, they must be required to protect the religious freedom of all those they serve. The language in these provisions would undermine that fundamental principle by broadly protecting chaplains who engage in unwelcome proselytization, violating service members freedom of religion.

This freedom is grounded in the First Amendment, which protects the free exercise of religion while prohibiting the government from establishing or favoring a religion. Service members should be able to freely seek spiritual support without concern that they will be subjected to unwanted religious advocacy or pressure. This is especially important for members of minority faiths, including Jewish service members who may serve where a Jewish chaplain is unavailable. They, and all service members, should be able to seek religious support with confidence that their beliefs will be respected. Failure to protect these service members from such proselytization undermines readiness and combat effectiveness, weakening our Armed Forces.

We ask you to omit the provisions of the Military Chaplains Modernization Act of 2026 that risk enabling unwanted proselytization and undermining service members' religious freedom from the final Fiscal Year 2027 National Defense Authorization Act. We insist that the Department of Defense should uphold a clear and consistent approach to religious liberty across the Armed Forces, ensuring that service members are protected from unwanted religious advocacy and can access the pastoral care they seek.

Sincerely,

Bradley Scott Schneider
Member of Congress

Jerrold Nadler
Member of Congress

Jan Schakowsky
Member of Congress

Debbie Wasserman Schultz
Member of Congress

Lois Frankel
Member of Congress

Becca Balint
Member of Congress

Jake Auchincloss
Member of Congress

Jamie Raskin
Member of Congress

Josh Gottheimer
Member of Congress

Steve Cohen
Member of Congress

Laura Friedman
Member of Congress

Kim Schrier, M.D.
Member of Congress

Jared Moskowitz
Member of Congress

Dan Goldman
Member of Congress

Greg Landsman
Member of Congress

Sara Jacobs
Member of Congress

Seth Magaziner
Member of Congress

Mike Levin
Member of Congress

Brad Sherman
Member of Congress

Suzanne Bonamici
Member of Congress

Eugene Simon Vindman
Member of Congress