

United States Senate
WASHINGTON, DC 20510

October 19, 2023

The Honorable Frank Kendall
Secretary of the Air Force
1670 Air Force Pentagon
Washington, DC 20330-1670

Dear Secretary Kendall:

As you know, our Armed Forces are defined by the caliber of men and women who answer the call to serve. This includes members of the Air National Guard (ANG), who not only serve invaluable roles in the communities across our states, but also perform missions critical to our national security alongside their active-duty counterparts. As such, their benefits should match their service and those afforded to their peers in the Army National Guard. That is why we request you establish a permanent ANG federal tuition assistance (Fed TA) program and include at least \$4 million in funding for it in your fiscal year (FY) 2025 budget request.

Our Armed Forces seek to recruit the best and brightest young people to protect and defend our nation, and educational benefits are one of the most appealing ways to help attract, develop, and retain outstanding Airmen. Drill Status Guard (DSG) members serving in the Army National Guard currently have access to a strong and successful Fed TA program, and given today's recruiting and retention challenges across all service branches, it is imperative that the Air Force have a similar Fed TA program in place for DSG members of the ANG.

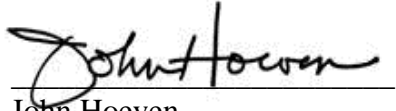
In 2020, we helped the ANG stand up the Fed TA BETA Test with the expectation that the program would be expanded incrementally until the Fed TA benefit was available to all ANG DSGs by FY 2026. The pilot program showed great success, with 974 ANG DSGs utilizing the program in FY 2021 and 838 ANG DSGs in FY 2023, according to the most recent data.

As evidence of Congress's support for the Fed TA program, every member of the Senate Appropriations Committee unanimously supported the following language included in the report (S. Rept. 118-81) accompanying the Senate Department of Defense Appropriations Bill, 2024 (S. 2587):

“The Committee supports the establishment of an Air National Guard tuition assistance program similar to that of the Army National Guard and encourages the Chief of the National Guard Bureau, to include the tuition assistance program for both the Army and Air Guard in its future budget requests.”

We look forward to working with you to provide educational benefits to members of the Air National Guard. Thank you for your consideration of our request. As always, thank you for your service to the nation and your commitment to our servicemembers and their families.

Sincerely,

Handwritten signature of John Hoeven in black ink, written over a horizontal line.

John Hoeven
United States Senator

Handwritten signature of Jeanne Shaheen in blue ink, written over a horizontal line.

Jeanne Shaheen
United States Senator