



Safe Kids Alaska  
Safe Kids Bartholomew County  
Safe Kids Colorado  
Safe Kids Colorado Springs  
Safe Kids Denver Metro  
Safe Kids Grand Forks

Safe Kids Fargo-Moorhead  
Safe Kids Hawaii  
Safe Kids Illinois  
Safe Kids Kansas  
Safe Kids Massachusetts  
Safe Kids Worldwide

April 11, 2019

Honorable James Inhofe  
Chairman  
U.S Senate Committee on Armed Services  
Russell Senate Building, SR-228  
Washington, DC 20510-6050

Honorable Jack Reed  
Ranking Member  
U.S. Senate Committee on Armed Services  
Russell Senate Office Building, SR-228  
Washington, DC 20510-6050

Dear Chairman Inhofe and Ranking Member Reed:

We join together as twelve Safe Kids Worldwide coalitions from throughout the U.S. to express our deep concern about the state of military housing and, specifically, the risks that such dangerous housing pose to children. By resolving these issues, we can prevent the injuries and health consequences currently stemming from this severely deficient housing. We thank the Committee for its bipartisan effort to consider these issues at the hearing on February 13, 2019.

We owe a great deal to the men and women who serve in uniform. They make tremendous sacrifices. Among them is the challenge of moving their family and spending long lapses of time when they are not around to share the parenting role. If a woman or man in uniform is deployed to a perilous part of the world, one thing they should not have to worry about are the living conditions of their spouse and children.

But they do.

- The Beckstrom family and their three children lived in privatized housing at Fort Bragg, NC. Their unit was flooded with untreated sewer water and toxic substances remained in the home. All three children sustained medical conditions because of their exposure to environmental hazards in the home.<sup>1</sup>
- At Fort Benning, Cale Brown settled his family at the Villages of Benning. He was an Army Colonel who served two tours of duty in Afghanistan and earned two Bronze Stars. The Browns' son, John Jr., started to experience troubling symptoms at 18-months-old. He would wake up screaming, refused food, forgot most of the words he had learned and did not respond to his name. What was wrong was a mystery, until testing of the home revealed over 100 spots in the home with lead paint, some peeling and crumbling.<sup>2</sup>
- Josh and Lacy Saindon, and their three kids ranging from age 2 to 7, lived in military housing at Ft. Meade, Maryland for more than two years. Their Basic Allowance for Housing (BAH) paid the private developer \$2,200 each month. There were failing appliances, warped siding, and mold growing on the floor and walls of the kids' bedroom. Kids sustained ear infections, sinus infections and colds.<sup>3</sup>

Over 100,000 children under age five live in military housing.<sup>4</sup> At the February 13 hearing, the Military Family Advisory Network cited further housing problems based on a survey it conducted of over 16,000 respondents living in military housing currently or within the last three years. These issues included rats, bats, roaches, termites, non-functional HVAC systems and contaminated water.<sup>5</sup> At Fort Meade housing, a ceiling collapsed on the bed in a child's bedroom.<sup>6</sup> Worse yet, because of the way military housing is funded, families could not exercise the basic right most tenants have: withholding of rent.

There are other child safety essentials involving military housing. Safe Kids coalitions weighed in on the need for military housing to be equipped with window guards. This was in response to the death of Evan English, 4 and ½ years old, who fell out of a second-floor window after the screen gave way at his family's home on the

Aliamanu Military Reservation in Hawaii.<sup>7 8</sup> Safe Kids has outlined other cost-effective measures to keep kids safer in military housing, including fire sprinkler systems in new housing, long-lasting carbon monoxide/smoke detectors and anti-scald devices to maintain safe water heater temperatures.

Safe Kids is dedicated to preventing injury involving children 19 and under, from car crashes to serious injuries in the home. We are a network of 417 coalitions throughout the United States, located at children's hospitals, health departments and police and fire stations. We join together urging you to use your oversight authority to ensure that the men and women who make us safe around the world can raise their families in safe and healthy homes.

Sincerely,

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Safe Kids Worldwide

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<sup>1</sup> Military Family Advisory Network. (2019, February 13). *Preliminary Research Report: Living Conditions of Families in Privatized Military Housing*. Available at: <http://militaryfamilyadvisorynetwork.org/wp-content/uploads/Privatized-Military-Housing-Survey-Report.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> Schneyer, J. (2018, August 16). *Special Report: Children Poisoned by Lead on U.S. Army Bases as Hazards Ignored*. Reuters. Available at: <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-usa-military-housing-specialreport/special-report-children-poisoned-by-lead-on-u-s-army-bases-as-hazards-ignored-idUSKBN1L11P>

<sup>3</sup> Crawford, J. (2019, February 13). *Senators Outraged by Testimony about Living Conditions on Military Bases*. CBS News. Available at: <https://www.cbsnews.com/news/military-base-housing-senators-outraged-by-testimony-about-living-conditions-on-military-bases/>

<sup>4</sup> Krajick, K. (2018, August 21). *Lead Is Poisoning Children on U.S. Military Bases, Says Report*. Lamont-Doherty Earth Observatory. Columbia University. Available at: <https://www.ldeo.columbia.edu/news-events/lead-poisoning-children-us-military-bases-says-report>

<sup>5</sup> Military Family Advisory Network. (2019, February 13). *Preliminary Research Report: Living Conditions of Families in Privatized Military Housing*. Available at: <http://militaryfamilyadvisorynetwork.org/wp-content/uploads/Privatized-Military-Housing-Survey-Report.pdf>

<sup>6</sup> Schneyer J, Januta A. (2018, December 27). *Special Report: As Their Landlord Profits, Soldier Battle Unsafe Army Homes*. Reuters. Available at: <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-usa-military-developer-special-report/special-report-as-their-landlord-profits-soldiers-battle-unsafe-army-homes-idUSKCN1OQ0VO>

<sup>7</sup> Wehrman, J. (2017, July 14). *Evan's Law Passes to Protect Children on Military Bases from Falling*. Dayton Daily News. Available at: <https://www.daytondailynews.com/news/national-govt--politics/evan-law-passes-protect-children-military-bases-from-falling/KSquUkkRbyhx8wogaWxMqO/>

<sup>8</sup> U.S. Representative Mike Turner (R-OH) was successful in including a version of his legislation, Evan's Law, in the FY2018 Defense Authorization Act. The bill, named after Evan English, sought to include window fall prevention devices in military housing. National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2018, December 12, 2017. Section 2817. Available at: <https://www.congress.gov/bill/115th-congress/house-bill/2810>. Safe Kids Worldwide supported this legislation.