

March 23, 2025

Mr. Keith Bass  
Nominee for Assistant Secretary of Defense for Health Affairs  
The White House  
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW  
Washington, DC 20500

Dear Mr. Bass:

Congratulations on your nomination to serve as the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Health Affairs (ASD[HA]). If confirmed, the American people will depend on you to run the Military Health System (MHS), which provides healthcare to approximately 9.5 million active and retired service members and their families.<sup>1</sup> This is a job requiring government and health care management skills and expertise, and failure could result in lack of care or quality of care concerns for millions of the most deserving Americans. Given the reports of “severe and systemic problems” of the White House Medical Unit (WHMU) during your tenure as the director,<sup>2</sup> along with the fact that you were fired from your position running the CIA’s health care program,<sup>3</sup> I am concerned that you will not be capable of filling the role.

From 2013 to 2019, you were the director of the WHMU, overseeing care to the President, other senior officials, and their families.<sup>4</sup> During your tenure, several staff members issued complaints against you for overseeing “an operation that widely dispensed sedatives and stimulants, among other concerns.”<sup>5</sup> The Department of Defense’s Inspector General (DoD IG) found that between 2009 and 2018 “all phases of the WHMU’s pharmacy operations had severe and systemic problems due to the unit’s reliance on ineffective internal controls to ensure compliance with pharmacy safety standards.”<sup>6</sup> As a result, “the White House Medical Unit provided a wide range of health care and

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<sup>1</sup> Health.mil, “Assistant Secretary of Defense for Health Affairs,” <https://www.health.mil/About-MHS/OASDHA/ASDHA>; Health.mil, “About the Military Health System,” <https://www.health.mil/About-MHS>.

<sup>2</sup> Independent, “Trump staffers were given controlled substances by White House medical unit, report claims,” Katie Hawkinson, January 26, 2024, <https://www.the-independent.com/news/world/americas/us-politics/trump-staff-drugs-medicine-report-b2485591.html>.

<sup>3</sup> SpyTalk, “Trump's Pick for Top Pentagon Healthcare Job Was Fired by CIA,” Jeff Stein, January 12, 2025, <https://www.spytalk.co/p/trumps-pick-for-top-pentagon-healthcare>.

<sup>4</sup> Independent, “Trump staffers were given controlled substances by White House medical unit, report claims,” Katie Hawkinson, January 26, 2024, <https://www.the-independent.com/news/world/americas/us-politics/trump-staff-drugs-medicine-report-b2485591.html>.

<sup>5</sup> The Washington Post, “Trump picks billionaire financier for deputy defense secretary,” John Hudson, Michael Kranish and Dan Diamond, December 22, 2024, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/2024/12/22/trump-defense-department-stephen-feinberg/>.

<sup>6</sup> Department of Defense Office of the Inspector General, “Evaluation of the DoD Internal Controls Related to Patient Eligibility and Pharmaceutical Management Within the National Capital Region Executive Medicine Services,” January

pharmaceutical services to ineligible White House staff in violation of federal law and regulation and DoD policy” and “that White House Medical Unit senior leaders directed eligibility practices that did not comply with DoD guidance.”<sup>7</sup> The WHMU “passed out sedatives such as Ambien and stimulants such as Provigil without proper prescriptions, provided complimentary medical equipment and imaging to ineligible staffers, and used aliases in electronic health records to disguise the patients’ identities and deliver free care in cases where the recipients wouldn’t be eligible.”<sup>8</sup> Some former staff members said they were “admonished” by senior leaders when they raised concerns regarding patient eligibility practices while others “felt unable to act outside of the will of the Physician to the President or the White House Medical Unit Director.”<sup>9</sup> At best, you were oblivious to the wide distribution of sedatives and stimulants by WHMU’s pharmacy operations and, in the worst case, you were complicit. Either scenario should disqualify you from serving as the ASD(HA).

After departing WHMU, you served as Director of the Office of Medical Services (OMS) at the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA). In this role, sources say you were “pushed out” because of your “messy” management of the OMS and poor communication, where you “offloaded” Anomalous Health Incidents (AHI) responsibilities to your deputies.<sup>10</sup> One of your former colleagues said that under your leadership the office also “badly handled the surge of Covid-19 cases, afflicting the agency’s rank and file.”<sup>11</sup> Finally, “after fumbling the agency’s handling of Havana Syndrome” (also known as AHI) you were fired from your position.<sup>12</sup> Following your departure, “Congress inserted a little-noticed provision into the *Intelligence Authorization Act* for fiscal year 2022 mandating a complete overhaul of the OMS, which included stricter oversight and a new medical advisory board composed of 13 experts nominated by the Democratic and Republican leaders of the House and Senate intelligence committees and the director of National Intelligence.”<sup>13</sup> Your poor performance in this position casts doubt on your ability to serve in a position requiring broader management skills.

If confirmed as ASD(HA), you will become the “principal advisor to the Secretary of Defense and the Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness (USD[P&R]) for all Department of Defense health and force health protection policies, programs, and activities” and oversee budgeting across the MHS.<sup>14</sup> In other words, you will control the medical and dental system that provides care

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8, 2024, p. 9, [https://media.defense.gov/2024/Jan/09/2003373440/-1/-1/1/DODIG-2024-044\\_REDACTED%20SECURE.PDF](https://media.defense.gov/2024/Jan/09/2003373440/-1/-1/1/DODIG-2024-044_REDACTED%20SECURE.PDF).

<sup>7</sup> *Id.* pp. ii, 31.

<sup>8</sup> Washington Post, “‘No prescription needed’: Inside a White House clinic’s ‘systemic problems,’” Dan Diamond and Michael Kranish, February 16, 2024, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/2024/12/22/trump-defense-department-stephen-feinberg/>.

<sup>9</sup> Department of Defense Office of the Inspector General, “Evaluation of the DoD Internal Controls Related to Patient Eligibility and Pharmaceutical Management Within the National Capital Region Executive Medicine Services,” January 8, 2024, p. 38, [https://media.defense.gov/2024/Jan/09/2003373440/-1/-1/1/DODIG-2024-044\\_REDACTED%20SECURE.PDF](https://media.defense.gov/2024/Jan/09/2003373440/-1/-1/1/DODIG-2024-044_REDACTED%20SECURE.PDF).

<sup>10</sup> SpyTalk, “Trump’s Pick for Top Pentagon Healthcare Job Was Fired by CIA,” Jeff Stein, January 12, 2025, <https://www.spytalk.co/p/trumps-pick-for-top-pentagon-healthcare>; Military.com, “Trump’s Pick for Top Pentagon Health Care Job Was Fired by CIA,” Jeff Stein, January 13, 2025, <https://www.military.com/daily-news/2025/01/13/trumps-pick-top-pentagon-healthcare-job-was-fired-cia.html>.

<sup>11</sup> *Id.*

<sup>12</sup> *Id.*

<sup>13</sup> *Id.*

<sup>14</sup> Health.mil, “Assistant Secretary of Defense for Health Affairs,” <https://www.health.mil/About-MHS/OASDHA/ASDHA>; Health.mil, “Health Affairs Leaders,” <https://www.health.mil/About-MHS/Biographies#:~:text=Health%20Affairs%20Leaders,Deputy%20Assistant%20Secretaries%20of%20Defense>.

to 9.5 million servicemembers, veterans, and their families.<sup>15</sup> Given your checkered past involving the disbursement of controlled substances within the WHMU, and your failures in managing the CIA’s health care program, I am concerned that if you are confirmed, you will not be able to effectively manage the military health care system, placing care at risk for millions. I urge you to demonstrate a commitment to clarity and request that you reply to the following question in writing by March 26, 2025:

1. During your tenure with the WHMU, did you have knowledge of WHMU staff dispensing controlled substances to ineligible staffers?
  - a. If so:
    - i. How long were you aware of the situation?
    - ii. What steps, if any, did you take to correct the issue?
    - iii. Did you or staff, under your direction, dispense controlled substances to ineligible staffers?
2. During your tenure with the WHMU, were you aware of the “severe and systemic problems”<sup>16</sup> happening within the WHMU?
  - a. If so, how long were you aware of the situation?
  - b. What steps, if any, did you take to mitigate these problems?
3. Reporting by the DoD OIG found that the WHMU staff performed tasks in violation of Code of Federal Regulations, Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) policy, and DoD guidance.<sup>17</sup>
  - a. During your tenure with the WHMU, did you conduct tasks in violation of federal law, policy, or guidance?
  - b. During your tenure with the WHMU, did you direct staff to conduct tasks in violation of federal law, policy, or guidance?
  - c. During your tenure with the WHMU, were you aware of any conduct that violated federal law, policy, or guidance?
4. Reporting by the DoD OIG found that the WHMU wasted thousands of dollars on brand-name drugs rather than generic equivalents.<sup>18</sup>
  - a. If confirmed as the ASD(HA), what steps will you take to prevent similar waste?
5. Did any WHMU staff raise concerns with you about improper dispersal of controlled substances?

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<sup>15</sup> Health.mil, “About the Military Health System,” <https://www.health.mil/About-MHS>.

<sup>16</sup> Independent, “Trump staffers were given controlled substances by White House medical unit, report claims,” Katie Hawkinson, January 26, 2024, <https://www.the-independent.com/news/world/americas/us-politics/trump-staff-drugs-medicine-report-b2485591.html>.


<sup>17</sup> Department of Defense Office of the Inspector General, “Evaluation of the DoD Internal Controls Related to Patient Eligibility and Pharmaceutical Management Within the National Capital Region Executive Medicine Services,” January 8, 2024, pp. 9-10, 32, [https://media.defense.gov/2024/Jan/09/2003373440/-1/-1/1/DODIG-2024-044\\_REDACTED%20SECURE.PDF](https://media.defense.gov/2024/Jan/09/2003373440/-1/-1/1/DODIG-2024-044_REDACTED%20SECURE.PDF).

<sup>18</sup> *Id.* p. 7.

6. Did you admonish, discipline, threaten, or retaliate against anyone who raised concerns about improper dispersal of controlled substances?
7. Were you at any time contacted by or under investigation or review by the DoD OIG for your role in the “severe and systemic problems” of the WHMU, or for any other reason?
8. SpyTalk reported that you were a poor communicator and “offloaded” your responsibilities to others when you were the Director of the Office of Medical Services at the CIA.<sup>19</sup>
  - a. If confirmed as the ASD(HA), what steps would you take to prevent miscommunication in this new role?
9. Your lack of medical training caused friction when you were the Director of the Office of Medical Services at the CIA.<sup>20</sup>
  - a. If confirmed, what will you do to prevent similar friction and concerns in your new role?
10. Will you commit to recuse from all particular matters involving your former clients and employers for at least four years?
11. Will you commit to not seek employment, board membership with, or another form of compensation from a company that you regulated or otherwise interacted with while in government, for at least four years after leaving office?
12. Will you commit to not lobby — including through work as an informal “shadow lobbyist” — any part of DoD for at least four years after leaving office?

Thank you for your attention to this important matter.

Sincerely,



Elizabeth Warren  
United States Senator

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<sup>19</sup> SpyTalk, “Trump's Pick for Top Pentagon Healthcare Job Was Fired by CIA,” Jeff Stein, January 12, 2025, <https://www.spytalk.co/p/trumps-pick-for-top-pentagon-healthcare>.

<sup>20</sup> Military.com, “Trump's Pick for Top Pentagon Health Care Job Was Fired by CIA,” Jeff Stein, January 13, 2025, <https://www.military.com/daily-news/2025/01/13/trumps-pick-top-pentagon-healthcare-job-was-fired-cia.html>.