

Anxiously, I took my seat before the House Armed Services Committee. The room fell silent as we testified about the living conditions our families had been subjected to while living in privatized military housing. As we told our stories about mold, rats, cockroaches, lead paint, and radon, the silence was occasionally broken by empathetic murmurs as the representatives listened intently.

The three women testifying next to me were seasoned military spouses, having endured countless moves and deployments. Wives to Green Berets and Navy Seals, they were the epitome of strength and resilience. Yet, the condition of their homes was so horrendous it brought them to tears as they recounted their stories.

I, on the other hand, at 20 years old, had been a military spouse for less than a year. My husband was a newly commissioned officer, and we were living at our first duty station in a remote town in West Texas. Shortly after moving into our on-base home, I was hospitalized. My husband and I soon discovered that our home, like many others on the installation, was infested with toxic mold that was making me sick.

Out of desperation and solidarity, other military wives and I began a letter-writing campaign to members of Congress, calling for immediate action and reform in military housing. We shared personal anecdotes, describing instances of illnesses triggered by mold exposure and commiserated about children who were afraid to sleep due to rat infestations.

When I received an invitation from the House Armed Services Committee to testify on the deplorable state of military housing, I was both honored and humbled. However, I also understood the gravity of the situation. This was our chance to shed light on a seemingly impossible problem, and I was determined to make every word of my testimony count. As I ascended the steps and entered the hallowed halls of Congress armed with my testimony, I knew that I was not only representing myself but thousands of military families who were suffering across the country.

The response from Congress was immediate and profound. In the days following the hearing, a series of rigorous investigations were launched into the management and state of privatized military housing across the country. As a part of this investigation, the committee summoned the housing

providers and the leaders of each service branch to testify to the unacceptable conditions that service members had endured.

I soon found myself helping to write congressional legislation. The goal was to give families more control over their housing and improve the living conditions of military housing nationwide. The draft of The Tenant Bill of Rights included provisions that would ensure safe, quality, and well-maintained housing for service families.

Yet, despite being carefully crafted by committee members, congressional staffers, and service families and having clear bi-partisan support, drafting a meaningful bill was not without its challenges. The housing companies launched aggressive lobbying efforts to counter our proposed bill. With their substantial financial resources and political influence, the corporations worked to paint a misleading picture of military housing, downplaying the widespread problems we experienced.

Over the course of a year, I carefully poured over each iteration of the bill in painstaking detail. When lobbyists fought back, attempting to redline key initiatives, I journeyed back to Washington to speak with legislators face-to-face to ensure the bill would make it to the floor in its entirety. After months of hard work and persistence, The Tenant Bill of Rights passed through Congress and was signed into law. Together, we achieved an incredible feat that military families will benefit from for generations to come. I am proud to have been a part of such an impactful endeavor.

Being a military spouse has profoundly shaped my beliefs and values, and I carry the lessons of resilience, perseverance, and an unwavering commitment to serve others in everything I do. It is this philosophy that guides me as I strive to make a lasting impact on our world. Through this fight, I developed a passion for law and the potential it holds to affect positive change in our society. I intend to continue to advocate on behalf of those who need it. It is my goal to ensure that all individuals have access to the resources they need to live healthy, safe, and fulfilling lives. Law school is not simply the next step in my career path; it is a powerful platform that will allow me to effect real, tangible change in our world.