

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

March 30, 2026

The Honorable Anthony J. Tata
Undersecretary of War (Personnel and Readiness)
1000 Defense Pentagon
Washington, D.C. 20301-1000

Dear Mr. Secretary,

The commissary program has long provided servicemembers, military families, and other eligible beneficiaries with a stable, reliable, and affordable source of food. Its value to readiness and quality of life is demonstrated repeatedly during mobilizations, the COVID-19 pandemic, natural disasters, port disruptions, and broader global supply chain challenges. While the framework for delivering the benefit should evolve where appropriate to keep pace with changes in government operations and the commercial grocery sector, any such changes **must** preserve the core value of the benefit and ensure that patrons experience continuity, stability, and savings. We are increasingly concerned that the current transformation initiatives are unnecessarily placing the safeguards, funding balance, and longstanding structures that support this benefit at risk.

Before formalizing the transformation objectives outlined in the Defense Commissary Agency's January 26 trade notice, we urge you to obtain an independent third-party evaluation and simulation of the proposed benefit delivery model. That review should assess the risks to the revenue streams and operating balance that underpin this critical food support system, consistent with the privatization simulation language included in the Senate Armed Services Committee report accompanying the Fiscal Year 2026 National Defense Authorization Act. The review should include, at a minimum, the following considerations:

- 1.) For the defense mission, please assess whether the proposed model could increase concentration risk, reduce competition, or create overreliance on a limited number of suppliers in a system that must provide stable and predictable food support to a globally deployed force and accompanying family members.

- 2.) For the taxpayer, please examine contracting structures, oversight implications, and whether any new model could weaken federal control over appropriated resources or shift inherently governmental purchasing and product-selection decisions away from the government. Congress emphasized the importance of that federal role in section 652 of the Fiscal Year 2026 National Defense Authorization Act.
- 3.) For the patron, it should ensure that servicemembers and their families continue to receive the affordability, savings, reliability, and continuity Congress intended. The review should examine the potential loss of promotional trade support, disruption to direct manufacturer relationships, transition risk, reduced flexibility and transparency across the supply chain, impacts on assortment and responsiveness to local demand, and any structural misalignment of incentives that could weaken accountability.

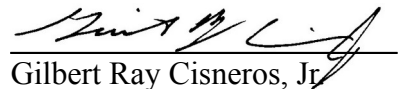
These major disruptions, **along with minor disruptions such as charging patrons for grocery bags beginning on April 6th**, jeopardizes consistency for theoretical efficiency. Many of the stated management objectives - including payment flow modernization, product optimization, distribution efficiencies, and strengthened accountability - could be achievable without placing patron benefits or taxpayer protections at risk. Our concern is that once the current structure is dismantled, many of its advantages may be difficult, if not impossible, to restore.

Congress, the Department, and the millions of commissary beneficiaries would all benefit from a fuller analysis before irreversible changes are made. We look forward to working with you to ensure this vital benefit remains stable, effective, and centered on the needs of the patrons it serves.

Sincerely,



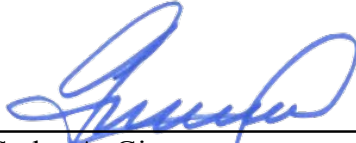
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