



CONGRESS OF THE UNITED STATES
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

February 19, 2016

General Robert B. Neller
Commandant of the Marine Corps
3000 Marine Corps, Pentagon
Washington DC 20350-3000

Dear General Neller,

Thank you for your dedication and commitment serving as the 37th Commandant of the United States Marine Corps. I was humbled to join you in celebrating the life of fallen Marine Sgt. Rafael Peralta during the christening of Bath Iron Works' newest DG1000 ship.

I write to you today concerning several policies and regulations that, however unintentional, directly affect female Marines' opportunities to serve. As women take more active roles in defending this country, it's important that we address some of the discrepancies that provide men with options unavailable to their female counterparts.

As you well know, male Marines are afforded the opportunity to choose between wearing—or not wearing—a white crewneck undershirt with both their Service Uniform “C” or their Dress Uniform “D.” The only allowable undershirt for female Marines is a v-neck and is not allowed to be visible. This means a tattoo that would be covered by a male Marine's undershirt could be visible and not covered by a female Marine's v-neck undershirt and the result, I believe, is an unintentional act of discrimination.

My office first learned of this uniform inconsistency after being contacted by a young woman anxious to serve under your command. She is bright, strong, motivated, and dedicated to overcoming the barriers currently prohibiting her from enlistment. She meets every prerequisite required by the USMC Recruiting Command other than her ability to obtain a tattoo waiver. A waiver request may be submitted in support of male applicants who have chest tattoos that would be covered up by the existing uniform regulations for Dress Uniform “D” and Service Uniform “C.” If female Marines were afforded the same opportunity to incorporate the white crewneck undershirt as part of their Dress Uniform “D” and their Service Uniform “C,” applicants like my qualified and determined constituent (with a small chest tattoo that would be concealed by the crewneck undershirt), would be adding to the strength and power of today's Marine Corps.

It is my hope that, under your command, we can review this administrative oversight and create policies and regulations that will allow the Marines of today to serve with equal opportunity.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Chellie R".

Chellie Pingree
Member of Congress