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## **‘Unsafe and Unheard’: Landmark National Survey Confirms Military Housing Crisis, Toxic Living Conditions for Thousands of Families**

*Survey: 97 percent of service members experience housing problems, many unresolved; Widespread health impacts affect readiness, recruitment and national security*

WASHINGTON, Nov. 20, 2025 – The nonprofit Change the Air Foundation today released a landmark national survey and a 10-minute documentary, *The Hidden Enemy*, confirming the health hazards and unsafe living conditions reported by thousands of military families in privatized housing.

The survey – “Unsafe and Unheard: Military Service Members and Their Families Sound Off on Dangerous Living Conditions” – includes responses from 3,401 service members and families at 57 military installations in 30 states and the District of Columbia. Conducted online between Oct. 6 and 27, 2025, the survey is among the most comprehensive independent examinations to date of housing conditions on U.S. military installations.

According to the 23-page survey report, 97 percent of service members reported at least one significant problem in their military-provided home. Mold, mildew, or microbial growth were the most commonly cited issues (74 percent), followed by water damage (54 percent), temperature or humidity problems (56 percent), pest infestations (53 percent), and HVAC failures (51 percent).

Half of all requests to address dangerous conditions (53 percent) reportedly go unresolved. Nearly half the respondents (47 percent) said housing-related issues have compromised their readiness. Two-thirds of those dealing with mold (66 percent) said they feel they have no viable options for relief or dispute resolution.

Brandon Chappo, Director of Public Policy and Co-Founder of Change the Air Foundation, said, “Taken together, these findings highlight a military housing system that is struggling to meet the needs of the families it was designed to support. With more than 99 percent of housing now managed by private companies under 50-year contracts, both this survey and *The Hidden Enemy* echo what families have been expressing for years. The serious impacts of these systemic challenges are far-reaching. This is not only a housing concern. It affects readiness, recruitment, health and ultimately our national security.”

### **Survey Reveals Widespread Unsafe Conditions**

Families also reported significant health impacts. Three-quarters (76 percent) said their family’s health had been negatively affected by housing conditions, and nearly half (48 percent) said a medical provider had confirmed the connection. Housing-related health impacts were reported

most by military families in Florida (84 percent), Hawaii (83 percent), and North Carolina (83 percent) and among those serving in the Marines (85 percent.)

Reported symptoms include headaches or migraines (37 percent), anxiety or mood changes (42 percent), sleep disruption (37 percent), and cognitive issues such as brain fog (32 percent).

Children in the survey experience substantial physical symptoms as well, including general irritation (40 percent), rashes or eczema (35 percent), chronic sinus infections (31 percent), and asthma (26 percent).

Across the country, families describe living in deteriorating housing where mold grows in children's rooms, water is contaminated, ceilings contain asbestos, and walls conceal lead. Many report rashes, respiratory illnesses, seizures, vision loss, and long-term medical diagnoses they attribute to unsafe housing conditions. Unsafe housing conditions contribute to school absences, medical emergencies, and degraded readiness. Families struggling with chronic illness and unsafe living conditions are less likely to reenlist, adding strain to recruitment and retention.

### **Retaliation Fears and a Faulty '3-Step Process'**

The existing reporting process for military housing issues compounds the families' problems, the survey finds. While 94 percent of the families always or often reported their housing problems to proper authorities, only 7 percent made it through the military's "3-Step Process" to resolve issues. When service members report housing issues, Nearly nine in 10 families (86 percent) had to report the same issue multiple times before receiving a service call which often resulted in the issue being marked as "resolved" despite no satisfactory action taken (66 percent) and a majority (53 percent) of the time they went unresolved entirely. Families also report being ignored by housing companies or pressured to sign non-disclosure agreements to secure basic repairs or temporary relocation. Unlike civilian renters, military tenants have limited legal protections under federal law, even when their homes pose verified health risks. Hundreds of families reported fear of retaliation (27 percent) or experienced it (10 percent), especially at Texas military installations.

### **Documentary Highlights Human Cost**

*The Hidden Enemy* chronicles the medical, financial, and emotional toll unsafe housing has taken on families stationed across the country. The documentary, available at [changetheairfoundation.org](http://changetheairfoundation.org), includes first-hand accounts from families whose lives have been upended by toxic exposures, unsafe homes, and a lack of meaningful oversight of the housing and it illustrates how toxic exposures, inadequate responses from housing companies, and legal barriers compound to create a national crisis largely hidden from public view.

### **Congress Requested Independent Data — Military Families Delivered It**

Earlier this year, Change the Air Foundation met with more than 60 congressional offices. Lawmakers said they needed independent data to fully understand the dangers families face in privatized housing. The national survey and documentary released today provide that evidence.

Erica Thompson, a 22-year senior military spouse whose family was adversely affected by housing issues and a volunteer Change the Air Foundation military families liaison, said, "Our work with

Congress and the Pentagon continues. Many agree that systemic problems with military housing have gone on for far too long. With this survey and with *The Hidden Enemy*, military families and the Foundation are providing answers to questions never before asked and we're offering recommendations for a better path forward for everyone involved in this issue."

### **Next Steps: Driving Reform Nationwide**

The survey findings are intended to support the continuing advocacy of Change the Air Foundation — alongside dedicated military family volunteers and allied organizations — which has fostered additions of critical mold and housing protections to the defense bills now moving through Congress. Chappo added, "This research urges the meaningful reforms and stronger oversight needed to restore trust, safeguard health, and ensure those who serve are not put at risk in their own homes."

Based on the survey findings and respondents' input, forthcoming policy recommendations by Change the Air Foundation will include:

- Enforcing ANSI/ IICRC S520 mold remediation standards so substandard repairs do not endanger families;
- Banning Non-Disclosure Agreements (NDAs) that silence families and hide accountability;
- Creating a legal carve-out to federal enclave law, restoring the same protections civilian renters already have;
- Requiring independent inspections and oversight to ensure transparency.

### **About Change the Air Foundation**

Change the Air Foundation, Inc. is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization dedicated to giving every person the knowledge, resources, and support to achieve better health by breathing safe indoor air. The organization focuses on public education, policy advocacy, and small-scale research aimed at addressing the nationwide crisis of poor indoor air quality — especially for military families. More information is available at [changetheairfoundation.org](http://changetheairfoundation.org).

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