The Honorable Carl Levin  
Chairman, Committee on Armed Services  
United States Senate  
Washington, DC 20510  

Dear Mr. Chairman:

This letter is in response to Section 717 of the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2008 (Public Law 110-181), which directed the Secretary of Defense to enter into a contract with the Institute of Medicine (IOM) of the National Academy of Sciences, or another similarly qualified independent academic medical organization, for the purpose of conducting an independent study of the credentials, preparation, and training of individuals practicing as licensed mental health counselors; and making recommendations for permitting licensed mental health counselors to practice independently under the TRICARE program. This Section also directed that the Secretary of Defense submit to the Committees on Armed Services of the Senate and the House of Representatives a report on the review.

In response to these requests, the Department of Defense (DoD) and IOM entered into a contract for the completion of the study and accompanying report. DoD has collaborated with IOM throughout the research process. This involvement included assisting with the development of appropriate research questions, identifying qualified individuals to serve on the research committee, briefing IOM on the TRICARE program, and providing data related to the provision of mental health care in the Military Health System.

The study has been completed and IOM has briefed TRICARE leadership on the findings. IOM also has released the report publically and has reported that they are in the process of providing the report and/or briefing to interested members of Congress on the findings.

IOM made the following recommendations regarding training and licensure requirements for mental health counselors wishing to practice independently within the TRICARE program:
• A master's or higher-level degree in counseling from a program in mental health counseling or clinical mental health counseling that is accredited by Council for Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs.
• A state license in mental health counseling at the "clinical" or the higher or highest level available in states that have tiered licensing schemes.
• Passage of the National Clinical Mental Health Counseling Examination.
• A well-defined scope of practice for practitioners.

We have reviewed these recommendations and find them to be in accordance with expectations for education, training, and supervised experience for other health care providers permitted independent practice in the TRICARE program. IOM's study was important in clarifying the components of professional education critical to safely and effectively assessing and treating our Service members and their families.

We believe that the findings of this study provide solid guidance to the Department to propose changes to regulation and policy to allow for the independent practice of licensed mental health counselors in the TRICARE program. The Department appreciates the opportunity to bring clarity to the role of licensed mental health counselors in the TRICARE program. Thank you for your continued support of the Military Health System.

Sincerely,

Charles L. Rice, M.D.
President, Uniformed Services University of the Health Sciences
Performing the Duties of the Assistant Secretary of Defense (Health Affairs)

cc:
The Honorable John McCain
Ranking Member
The Honorable James H. Webb  
Chairman, Subcommittee on Personnel  
Committee on Armed Services  
United States Senate  
Washington, DC 20510  

Dear Mr. Chairman:

This letter is in response to the Section 717 of National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2008 (Public Law 110-181), which directed the Secretary of Defense to enter into a contract with the Institute of Medicine (IOM) of the National Academy of Sciences, or another similarly qualified independent academic medical organization, for the purpose of conducting an independent study of the credentials, preparation, and training of individuals practicing as licensed mental health counselors; and making recommendations for permitting licensed mental health counselors to practice independently under the TRICARE program. This Section also directed that the Secretary of Defense submit to the Committees on Armed Services of the Senate and the House of Representatives a report on the review.

In response to these requests, the Department of Defense (DoD) and IOM entered into a contract for the completion of the study and accompanying report. DoD has collaborated with IOM throughout the research process. This involvement included assisting with the development of appropriate research questions, identifying qualified individuals to serve on the research committee, briefing IOM on the TRICARE program, and providing data related to the provision of mental health care in the Military Health System.

The study has been completed and IOM has briefed TRICARE leadership on the findings. IOM also has released the report publically and has reported that they are in the process of providing the report and/or briefing to interested members of Congress on the findings.

IOM made the following recommendations regarding training and licensure requirements for mental health counselors wishing to practice independently within the TRICARE program:
• A master's or higher-level degree in counseling from a program in mental health counseling or clinical mental health counseling that is accredited by Council for Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs.
• A state license in mental health counseling at the "clinical" or the higher or highest level available in states that have tiered licensing schemes.
• Passage of the National Clinical Mental Health Counseling Examination.
• A well-defined scope of practice for practitioners.

We have reviewed these recommendations and find them to be in accordance with expectations for education, training, and supervised experience for other health care providers permitted independent practice in the TRICARE program. IOM's study was important in clarifying the components of professional education critical to safely and effectively assessing and treating our Service members and their families.

We believe that the findings of this study provide solid guidance to the Department to propose changes to regulation and policy to allow for the independent practice of licensed mental health counselors in the TRICARE program. The Department appreciates the opportunity to bring clarity to the role of licensed mental health counselors in the TRICARE program. Thank you for your continued support of the Military Health System.

Sincerely,

Charles L. Rice, M.D.
President, Uniformed Services University of the Health Sciences
Performing the Duties of the Assistant Secretary of Defense (Health Affairs)

cc:
The Honorable Lindsey O. Graham
Ranking Member
The Honorable Ike Skelton  
Chairman, Committee on Armed Services  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington, DC  20515  

Dear Mr. Chairman:

This letter is in response to Section 717 of the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2008 (Public Law 110-181), which directed the Secretary of Defense to enter into a contract with the Institute of Medicine (IOM) of the National Academy of Sciences, or another similarly qualified independent academic medical organization, for the purpose of conducting an independent study of the credentials, preparation, and training of individuals practicing as licensed mental health counselors and making recommendations for permitting licensed mental health counselors to practice independently under the TRICARE program. This Section also directed that the Secretary of Defense submit to the Committees on Armed Services of the Senate and the House of Representatives a report on the review.

In response to these requests, the Department of Defense (DoD) and IOM entered into a contract for the completion of the study and accompanying report. DoD has collaborated with IOM throughout the research process. This involvement included assisting with the development of appropriate research questions, identifying qualified individuals to serve on the research committee, briefing IOM on the TRICARE program, and providing data related to the provision of mental health care in the Military Health System.

The study has been completed and IOM has briefed TRICARE leadership on the findings. IOM also has released the report publically and has reported that they are in the process of providing the report and/or briefing to interested members of Congress on the findings.

IOM made the following recommendations regarding training and licensure requirements for mental health counselors wishing to practice independently within the TRICARE program:
• A master’s or higher-level degree in counseling from a program in mental health counseling or clinical mental health counseling that is accredited by Council for Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs.
• A state license in mental health counseling at the “clinical” or the higher or highest level available in states that have tiered licensing schemes.
• Passage of the National Clinical Mental Health Counseling Examination.
• A well-defined scope of practice for practitioners.

We have reviewed these recommendations and find them to be in accordance with expectations for education, training, and supervised experience for other health care providers permitted independent practice in the TRICARE program. IOM’s study was important in clarifying the components of professional education critical to safely and effectively assessing and treating our Service members and their families.

We believe that the findings of this study provide solid guidance to the Department to propose changes to regulation and policy to allow for the independent practice of licensed mental health counselors in the TRICARE program. The Department appreciates the opportunity to bring clarity to the role of licensed mental health counselors in the TRICARE program. Thank you for your continued support of the Military Health System.

Sincerely,

[Signature]

Charles L. Rice, M.D.
President, Uniformed Services University of the Health Sciences
Performing the Duties of the Assistant Secretary of Defense (Health Affairs)

cc:
The Honorable Howard P. “Buck” McKeon
Ranking Member
Dear Madam Chairwoman:

This letter is in response to Section 717 of the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2008 (Public Law 110-181), which directed the Secretary of Defense to enter into a contract with the Institute of Medicine (IOM) of the National Academy of Sciences, or another similarly qualified independent academic medical organization, for the purpose of conducting an independent study of the credentials, preparation, and training of individuals practicing as licensed mental health counselors and making recommendations for permitting licensed mental health counselors to practice independently under the TRICARE program. This Section also directed that the Secretary of Defense submit to the Committees on Armed Services of the Senate and the House of Representatives a report on the review.

In response to these requests, the Department of Defense (DoD) and IOM entered into a contract for the completion of the study and accompanying report. DoD has collaborated with IOM throughout the research process. This involvement included assisting with the development of appropriate research questions, identifying qualified individuals to serve on the research committee, briefing IOM on the TRICARE program, and providing data related to the provision of mental health care in the Military Health System.

The study has been completed and IOM has briefed TRICARE leadership on the findings. IOM has also released the report publically and has reported that they are in the process of providing the report and/or briefing to interested members of Congress on the findings.

IOM made the following recommendations regarding training and licensure requirements for mental health counselors wishing to practice independently within the TRICARE program:
• A master’s or higher-level degree in counseling from a program in mental health counseling or clinical mental health counseling that is accredited by Council for Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs.
• A state license in mental health counseling at the “clinical” or the higher or highest level available in states that have tiered licensing schemes.
• Passage of the National Clinical Mental Health Counseling Examination.
• A well-defined scope of practice for practitioners.

We have reviewed these recommendations and find them to be in accordance with expectations for education, training, and supervised experienced for other health care providers permitted independent practice in the TRICARE program. IOM’s study was important in clarifying the components of professional education critical to safely and effectively assessing and treating our Service members and their families.

We believe that the findings of this study provide solid guidance to the Department to propose changes to regulation and policy to allow for the independent practice of licensed mental health counselors in the TRICARE program. The Department appreciates the opportunity to bring clarity to the role of licensed mental health counselors in the TRICARE program. Thank you for your continued support of the Military Health System.

Sincerely,

Charles L. Rice, M.D.
President, Uniformed Services University of the Health Sciences
Performing the Duties of the Assistant Secretary of Defense (Health Affairs)

cc:
The Honorable Joe Wilson
Ranking Member
The Honorable Daniel K. Inouye  
Chairman, Committee on Appropriations 
United States Senate  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Mr. Chairman:

This letter is in response to Section 717 of the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2008 (Public Law 110-181), which directed the Secretary of Defense to enter into a contract with the Institute of Medicine (IOM) of the National Academy of Sciences, or another similarly qualified independent academic medical organization, for the purpose of conducting an independent study of the credentials, preparation, and training of individuals practicing as licensed mental health counselors and making recommendations for permitting licensed mental health counselors to practice independently under the TRICARE program. This Section also directed that the Secretary of Defense submit to the Committees on Armed Services of the Senate and the House of Representatives a report on the review.

In response to these requests, the Department of Defense (DoD) and IOM entered into a contract for the completion of the study and accompanying report. DoD has collaborated with IOM throughout the research process. This involvement included assisting with the development of appropriate research questions, identifying qualified individuals to serve on the research committee, briefing IOM on the TRICARE program, and providing data related to the provision of mental health care in the Military Health System.

The study has been completed and IOM has briefed TRICARE leadership on the findings. IOM also has released the report publically and has reported that they are in the process of providing the report and/or briefing to interested members of Congress on the findings.

IOM made the following recommendations regarding training and licensure requirements for mental health counselors wishing to practice independently within the TRICARE program:
• A master’s or higher-level degree in counseling from a program in mental health counseling or clinical mental health counseling that is accredited by Council for Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs.
• A state license in mental health counseling at the “clinical” or the higher or highest level available in states that have tiered licensing schemes.
• Passage of the National Clinical Mental Health Counseling Examination.
• A well-defined scope of practice for practitioners.

We have reviewed these recommendations and find them to be in accordance with expectations for education, training, and supervised experienced for other health care providers permitted independent practice in the TRICARE program. IOM’s study was important in clarifying the components of professional education critical to safely and effectively assessing and treating our Service members and their families.

We believe that the findings of this study provide solid guidance to the Department to propose changes to regulation and policy to allow for the independent practice of licensed mental health counselors in the TRICARE program. The Department appreciates the opportunity to bring clarity to the role of licensed mental health counselors in the TRICARE program. Thank you for your continued support of the Military health System.

Sincerely,

Charles L. Rice, M.D.
President, Uniformed Services University of the Health Sciences
Performing the Duties of the Assistant Secretary of Defense (Health Affairs)

cc:
The Honorable Thad Cochran
Ranking Member
The Honorable Daniel K. Inouye  
Chairman, Subcommittee on Defense  
Committee on Appropriations  
United States Senate  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Mr. Chairman:

This letter is in response to Section 717 of the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2008 (Public Law 110-181), which directed the Secretary of Defense to enter into a contract with the Institute of Medicine (IOM) of the National Academy of Sciences, or another similarly qualified independent academic medical organization, for the purpose of conducting an independent study of the credentials, preparation, and training of individuals practicing as licensed mental health counselors and making recommendations for permitting licensed mental health counselors to practice independently under the TRICARE program. This Section also directed that the Secretary of Defense submit to the Committees on Armed Services of the Senate and the House of Representatives a report on the review.

In response to these requests, the Department of Defense (DoD) and IOM entered into a contract for the completion of the study and accompanying report. DoD has collaborated with IOM throughout the research process. This involvement included assisting with the development of appropriate research questions, identifying qualified individuals to serve on the research committee, briefing IOM on the TRICARE program, and providing data related to the provision of mental health care in the Military Health System.

The study has been completed and IOM has briefed TRICARE leadership on the findings. IOM also has released the report publically and has reported that they are in the process of providing the report and/or briefing to interested members of Congress on the findings.

IOM made the following recommendations regarding training and licensure requirements for mental health counselors wishing to practice independently within the TRICARE program:
• A master’s or higher-level degree in counseling from a program in mental health counseling or clinical mental health counseling that is accredited by Council for Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs.
• A state license in mental health counseling at the “clinical” or the higher or highest level available in states that have tiered licensing schemes.
• Passage of the National Clinical Mental Health Counseling Examination.
• A well-defined scope of practice for practitioners.

We have reviewed these recommendations and find them to be in accordance with expectations for education, training, and supervised experienced for other health care providers permitted independent practice in the TRICARE program. IOM’s study was important in clarifying the components of professional education critical to safely and effectively assessing and treating our Service members and their families.

We believe that the findings of this study provide solid guidance to the Department to propose changes to regulation and policy to allow for the independent practice of licensed mental health counselors in the TRICARE program. The Department appreciates the opportunity to bring clarity to the role of licensed mental health counselors in the TRICARE program. Thank you for your continued support of the Military Health System.

Sincerely,

[Signature]
Charles L. Rice, M.D.
President, Uniformed Services University of the Health Sciences
Performing the Duties of the Assistant Secretary of Defense (Health Affairs)

cc:
The Honorable Thad Cochran
Ranking Member
Dear Mr. Chairman:

This letter is in response to Section 717 of the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2008 (Public Law 110-181), which directed the Secretary of Defense to enter into a contract with the Institute of Medicine (IOM) of the National Academy of Sciences, or another similarly qualified independent academic medical organization, for the purpose of conducting an independent study of the credentials, preparation, and training of individuals practicing as licensed mental health counselors and making recommendations for permitting licensed mental health counselors to practice independently under the TRICARE program. This Section also directed that the Secretary of Defense submit to the Committees on Armed Services of the Senate and the House of Representatives a report on the review.

In response to these requests, the Department of Defense (DoD) and IOM entered into a contract for the completion of the study and accompanying report. DoD has collaborated with IOM throughout the research process. This involvement included assisting with the development of appropriate research questions, identifying qualified individuals to serve on the research committee, briefing IOM on the TRICARE program, and providing data related to the provision of mental health care in the Military Health System.

The study has been completed and IOM has briefed TRICARE leadership on the findings. IOM also has released the report publically and has reported that they are in the process of providing the report and/or briefing to interested members of Congress on the findings.

IOM made the following recommendations regarding training and licensure requirements for mental health counselors wishing to practice independently within the TRICARE program:
• A master's or higher-level degree in counseling from a program in mental health counseling or clinical mental health counseling that is accredited by Council for Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs.
• A state license in mental health counseling at the "clinical" or the higher or highest level available in states that have tiered licensing schemes.
• Passage of the National Clinical Mental Health Counseling Examination.
• A well-defined scope of practice for practitioners.

We have reviewed these recommendations and find them to be in accordance with expectations for education, training, and supervised experienced for other health care providers permitted independent practice in the TRICARE program. IOM's study was important in clarifying the components of professional education critical to safely and effectively assessing and treating our Service members and their families.

We believe that the findings of this study provide solid guidance to the Department to propose changes to regulation and policy to allow for the independent practice of licensed mental health counselors in the TRICARE program. The Department appreciates the opportunity to bring clarity to the role of licensed mental health counselors in the TRICARE program. Thank you for your continued support of the Military Health System.

Sincerely,

Charles L. Rice, M.D.
President, Uniformed Services University of the Health Sciences
Performing the Duties of the Assistant Secretary of Defense (Health Affairs)

cc: The Honorable Jerry Lewis
Ranking Member
The Honorable Norm Dicks
Chairman, Subcommittee on Defense
Committee on Appropriations
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Mr. Chairman:

This letter is in response to Section 717 of the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2008 (Public Law 110-181), which directed the Secretary of Defense to enter into a contract with the Institute of Medicine (IOM) of the National Academy of Sciences, or another similarly qualified independent academic medical organization, for the purpose of conducting an independent study of the credentials, preparation, and training of individuals practicing as licensed mental health counselors and making recommendations for permitting licensed mental health counselors to practice independently under the TRICARE program. This Section also directed that the Secretary of Defense submit to the Committees on Armed Services of the Senate and the House of Representatives a report on the review.

In response to these requests, the Department of Defense (DoD) and IOM entered into a contract for the completion of the study and accompanying report. DoD has collaborated with IOM throughout the research process. This involvement included assisting with the development of appropriate research questions, identifying qualified individuals to serve on the research committee, briefing IOM on the TRICARE program, and providing data related to the provision of mental health care in the Military Health System.

The study has been completed and IOM has briefed TRICARE leadership on the findings. IOM also has released the report publically and has reported that they are in the process of providing the report and/or briefing to interested members of Congress on the findings.

IOM made the following recommendations regarding training and licensure requirements for mental health counselors wishing to practice independently within the TRICARE program:
• A master’s or higher-level degree in counseling from a program in mental health counseling or clinical mental health counseling that is accredited by Council for Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs.

• A state license in mental health counseling at the "clinical" or the higher or highest level available in states that have tiered licensing schemes.

• Passage of the National Clinical Mental Health Counseling Examination.

• A well-defined scope of practice for practitioners.

We have reviewed these recommendations and find them to be in accordance with expectations for education, training, and supervised experience for other health care providers permitted independent practice in the TRICARE program. IOM’s study was important in clarifying the components of professional education critical to safely and effectively assessing and treating our Service members and their families.

We believe that the findings of this study provide solid guidance to the Department to propose changes to regulation and policy to allow for the independent practice of licensed mental health counselors in the TRICARE program. The Department appreciates the opportunity to bring clarity to the role of licensed mental health counselors in the TRICARE program. Thank you for your continued support of the Military Health System.

Sincerely,

Charles L. Rice, M.D.
President, Uniformed Services University of the Health Sciences
Performing the Duties of the Assistant Secretary of Defense (Health Affairs)

cc:
The Honorable C. W. Bill Young
Ranking Member
The Honorable Joseph R. Biden
President of the Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Mr. President:

This letter is in response to the Section 717 of the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2008 (Public Law 110-181), which directed the Secretary of Defense to enter into a contract with the Institute of Medicine (IOM) of the National Academy of Sciences, or another similarly qualified independent academic medical organization, for the purpose of conducting an independent study of the credentials, preparation, and training of individuals practicing as licensed mental health counselors and making recommendations for permitting licensed mental health counselors to practice independently under the TRICARE program. This section also directed that the Secretary of Defense submit to the Committees on Armed Services of the Senate and the House of Representatives a report on the review.

In response to these requests, the Department of Defense (DoD) and IOM entered into a contract for the completion of the study and accompanying report. DoD has collaborated with IOM throughout the research process. This involvement included assisting with the development of appropriate research questions, identifying qualified individuals to serve on the research committee, briefing IOM on the TRICARE program, and providing data related to the provision of mental health care in the Military Health System.

The study has been completed, and IOM has briefed TRICARE leadership on the findings. IOM also has released the report publically and has reported that they are in the process of providing the report and/or briefing to interested Members of Congress on the findings.

IOM made the following recommendations regarding training and licensure requirements for mental health counselors wishing to practice independently within the TRICARE program:

- A master’s or higher-level degree in counseling from a program in mental health counseling or clinical mental health counseling that is accredited by Council for Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs.
- A state license in mental health counseling at the “clinical” or the higher or highest level available in states that have tiered licensing schemes.
• Passage of the National Clinical Mental Health Counseling Examination.
• A well-defined scope of practice for practitioners.

We have reviewed these recommendations and find them to be in accordance with expectations for education, training, and supervised experienced for other health care providers permitted independent practice in the TRICARE program. IOM’s study was important in clarifying the components of professional education critical to safely and effectively assessing and treating our Service members and their families.

We believe that the findings of this study provide solid guidance to the Department to propose changes to regulation and policy to allow for the independent practice of licensed mental health counselors in the TRICARE program. The Department appreciates the opportunity to bring clarity to the role of licensed mental health counselors in the TRICARE program and your interest in expanding access to health care for our beneficiaries.

Sincerely,

Charles L. Rice, M.D.
President, Uniformed Services University of the Health Sciences
Performing the Duties of the Assistant Secretary of Defense (Health Affairs)
Dear Madam Speaker:

This letter is in response to the Section 717 of the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2008 (Public Law 110-181), which directed the Secretary of Defense to enter into a contract with the Institute of Medicine (IOM) of the National Academy of Sciences, or another similarly qualified independent academic medical organization, for the purpose of conducting an independent study of the credentials, preparation, and training of individuals practicing as licensed mental health counselors and making recommendations for permitting licensed mental health counselors to practice independently under the TRICARE program. This section also directed that the Secretary of Defense submit to the Committees on Armed Services of the Senate and the House of Representatives a report on the review.

In response to these requests, the Department of Defense (DoD) and IOM entered into a contract for the completion of the study and accompanying report. The DoD has collaborated with IOM throughout the research process. This involvement included assisting with the development of appropriate research questions, identifying qualified individuals to serve on the research committee, briefing IOM on the TRICARE program, and providing data related to the provision of mental health care in the Military Health System.

The study has been completed, and IOM has briefed TRICARE leadership on the findings. IOM has also released the report publically and has reported that they are in the process of providing the report and/or briefing to interested Members of Congress on the findings.

IOM made the following recommendations regarding training and licensure requirements for mental health counselors wishing to practice independently within the TRICARE program:

- A master's or higher-level degree in counseling from a program in mental health counseling or clinical mental health counseling that is accredited by Council for Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs.
• A state license in mental health counseling at the "clinical" or the higher or highest level available in states that have tiered licensing schemes.
• Passage of the National Clinical Mental Health Counseling Examination.
• A well-defined scope of practice for practitioners.

We have reviewed these recommendations and find them to be in accordance with expectations for education, training, and supervised experienced for other health care providers permitted independent practice in the TRICARE program. IOM's study was important in clarifying the components of professional education critical to safely and effectively assessing and treating our Service members and their families.

We believe that the findings of this study provide solid guidance to the Department to propose changes to regulation and policy to allow for the independent practice of licensed mental health counselors in the TRICARE program. The Department appreciates the opportunity to bring clarity to the role of licensed mental health counselors in the TRICARE program and your interest in expanding access to health care for our beneficiaries.

Sincerely,

Charles L. Rice, M.D.
President, Uniformed Services University of the Health Sciences
Performing the Duties of the Assistant Secretary of Defense (Health Affairs)
The Honorable Daniel Akaka  
Chairman, Subcommittee on Readiness and Management Support  
Committee on Armed Services  
United States Senate  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Mr. Chairman:

This letter is in response to the Section 717 of the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2008 (Public Law 110-181), which directed the Secretary of Defense to enter into a contract with the Institute of Medicine (IOM) of the National Academy of Sciences, or another similarly qualified independent academic medical organization, for the purpose of conducting an independent study of the credentials, preparation, and training of individuals practicing as licensed mental health counselors and making recommendations for permitting licensed mental health counselors to practice independently under the TRICARE program. This section also directed that the Secretary of Defense submit to the Committees on Armed Services of the Senate and the House of Representatives a report on the review.

In response to these requests, the Department of Defense (DoD) and IOM entered into a contract for the completion of the study and accompanying report. DoD has collaborated with IOM throughout the research process. This involvement included assisting with the development of appropriate research questions, identifying qualified individuals to serve on the research committee, briefing IOM on the TRICARE program, and providing data related to the provision of mental health care in the Military Health System.

The study has been completed and IOM has briefed TRICARE leadership on the findings. IOM also has released the report publically and has reported that they are in the process of providing the report and/or briefing to interested Members of Congress on the findings.

IOM made the following recommendations regarding training and licensure requirements for mental health counselors wishing to practice independently within the TRICARE program:

• A master’s or higher-level degree in counseling from a program in mental health counseling or clinical mental health counseling that is accredited by Council for Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs.
• A state license in mental health counseling at the "clinical" or the higher or highest level available in states that have tiered licensing schemes.
• Passage of the National Clinical Mental Health Counseling Examination.
• A well-defined scope of practice for practitioners.

We have reviewed these recommendations and find them to be in accordance with expectations for education, training, and supervised experienced for other health care providers permitted independent practice in the TRICARE program. IOM’s study was important in clarifying the components of professional education critical to safely and effectively assessing and treating our Service members and their families.

We believe that the findings of this study provide solid guidance to the Department to propose changes to regulation and policy to allow for the independent practice of licensed mental health counselors in the TRICARE program. The Department appreciates the opportunity to bring clarity to the role of licensed mental health counselors in the TRICARE program and your interest in expanding access to health care for our beneficiaries.

Sincerely,

[Signature]

Charles L. Rice, M.D.
President, Uniformed Services University of the Health Sciences
Performing the Duties of the Assistant Secretary of Defense (Health Affairs)

cc:
The Honorable John Ensign
Ranking Member
The Honorable Solomon P. Ortiz  
Chairman, Subcommittee on Readiness  
Committee on Armed Services  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Mr. Chairman:

This letter is in response to the Section 717 of the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2008 (Public Law 110-181), which directed the Secretary of Defense to enter into a contract with the Institute of Medicine (IOM) of the National Academy of Sciences, or another similarly qualified independent academic medical organization, for the purpose of conducting an independent study of the credentials, preparation, and training of individuals practicing as licensed mental health counselors and making recommendations for permitting licensed mental health counselors to practice independently under the TRICARE program. This section also directed that the Secretary of Defense submit to the Committees on Armed Services of the Senate and the House of Representatives a report on the review.

In response to these requests, the Department of Defense (DoD) and IOM entered into a contract for the completion of the study and accompanying report. DoD has collaborated with IOM throughout the research process. This involvement included assisting with the development of appropriate research questions, identifying qualified individuals to serve on the research committee, briefing IOM on the TRICARE program, and providing data related to the provision of mental health care in the Military Health System.

The study has been completed and IOM has briefed TRICARE leadership on the findings. IOM also has released the report publically and has reported that they are in the process of providing the report and/or briefing to interested Members of Congress on the findings.

IOM made the following recommendations regarding training and licensure requirements for mental health counselors wishing to practice independently within the TRICARE program:

- A master's or higher-level degree in counseling from a program in mental health counseling or clinical mental health counseling that is accredited by Council for Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs.
• A state license in mental health counseling at the “clinical” or the higher or highest level available in states that have tiered licensing schemes.
• Passage of the National Clinical Mental Health Counseling Examination.
• A well-defined scope of practice for practitioners.

We have reviewed these recommendations and find them to be in accordance with expectations for education, training, and supervised experienced for other health care providers permitted independent practice in the TRICARE program. IOM’s study was important in clarifying the components of professional education critical to safely and effectively assessing and treating our Service members and their families.

We believe that the findings of this study provide solid guidance to the Department to propose changes to regulation and policy to allow for the independent practice of licensed mental health counselors in the TRICARE program. The Department appreciates the opportunity to bring clarity to the role of licensed mental health counselors in the TRICARE program and your interest in expanding access to health care for our beneficiaries.

Sincerely,

[Signature]

Charles L. Rice, M.D.
President, Uniformed Services University of the Health Sciences
Performing the Duties of the Assistant Secretary of Defense (Health Affairs)

cc:
The Honorable Randy Forbes
Ranking Member
Dear Mr. Chairman:

This letter is in response to the Section 717 of the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2008 (Public Law 110-181), which directed the Secretary of Defense to enter into a contract with the Institute of Medicine (IOM) of the National Academy of Sciences, or another similarly qualified independent academic medical organization, for the purpose of conducting an independent study of the credentials, preparation, and training of individuals practicing as licensed mental health counselors and making recommendations for permitting licensed mental health counselors to practice independently under the TRICARE program. This section also directed that the Secretary of Defense submit to the Committees on Armed Services of the Senate and the House of Representatives a report on the review.

In response to these requests, the Department of Defense (DoD) and IOM entered into a contract for the completion of the study and accompanying report. DoD has collaborated with IOM throughout the research process. This involvement included assisting with the development of appropriate research questions, identifying qualified individuals to serve on the research committee, briefing IOM on the TRICARE program, and providing data related to the provision of mental health care in the Military Health System.

The study has been completed, and IOM has briefed TRICARE leadership on the findings. IOM also has released the report publically and has reported that they are in the process of providing the report and/or briefing to interested Members of Congress on the findings.

IOM made the following recommendations regarding training and licensure requirements for mental health counselors wishing to practice independently within the TRICARE program:
• A master's or higher-level degree in counseling from a program in mental health counseling or clinical mental health counseling that is accredited by Council for Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs.
• A state license in mental health counseling at the "clinical" or the higher or highest level available in states that have tiered licensing schemes.
• Passage of the National Clinical Mental Health Counseling Examination.
• A well-defined scope of practice for practitioners.

We have reviewed these recommendations and find them to be in accordance with expectations for education, training, and supervised experienced for other health care providers permitted independent practice in the TRICARE program. IOM's study was important in clarifying the components of professional education critical to safely and effectively assessing and treating our Service members and their families.

We believe that the findings of this study provide solid guidance to the Department to propose changes to regulation and policy to allow for the independent practice of licensed mental health counselors in the TRICARE program. The Department appreciates the opportunity to bring clarity to the role of licensed mental health counselors in the TRICARE program and your interest in expanding access to health care for our beneficiaries.

Sincerely,

Charles L. Rice, M.D.
President, Uniformed Services University of the Health Sciences
Performing the Duties of the Assistant Secretary of Defense (Health Affairs)

cc:
The Honorable Kay Bailey Hutchison
Ranking Member
The Honorable Chet Edwards  
Chairman, Subcommittee on Military Construction,  
Veterans Administration, & Related Agencies  
Committee on Appropriations  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington, DC  20515  

Dear Mr. Chairman:

This letter is in response to the Section 717 of the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2010 (Public Law 111-181), which directed the Secretary of Defense to enter into a contract with the Institute of Medicine (IOM) of the National Academy of Sciences, or another similarly qualified independent academic medical organization, for the purpose of conducting an independent study of the credentials, preparation, and training of individuals practicing as licensed mental health counselors and making recommendations for permitting licensed mental health counselors to practice independently under the TRICARE program. This section also directed that the Secretary of Defense submit to the Committees on Armed Services of the Senate and the House of Representatives a report on the review.

In response to these requests, the Department of Defense (DoD) and IOM entered into a contract for the completion of the study and accompanying report. DoD has collaborated with IOM throughout the research process. This involvement included assisting with the development of appropriate research questions, identifying qualified individuals to serve on the research committee, briefing IOM on the TRICARE program, and providing data related to the provision of mental health care in the Military Health System.

The study has been completed, and IOM has briefed TRICARE leadership on the findings. IOM also has released the report publically and has reported that they are in the process of providing the report and/or briefing to interested Members of Congress on the findings.

IOM made the following recommendations regarding training and licensure requirements for mental health counselors wishing to practice independently within the TRICARE program:
• A master’s or higher-level degree in counseling from a program in mental health counseling or clinical mental health counseling that is accredited by Council for Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs.
• A state license in mental health counseling at the “clinical” or the higher or highest level available in states that have tiered licensing schemes.
• Passage of the National Clinical Mental Health Counseling Examination.
• A well-defined scope of practice for practitioners.

We have reviewed these recommendations and find them to be in accordance with expectations for education, training, and supervised experienced for other health care providers permitted independent practice in the TRICARE program. IOM’s study was important in clarifying the components of professional education critical to safely and effectively assessing and treating our Service members and their families.

We believe that the findings of this study provide solid guidance to the Department to propose changes to regulation and policy to allow for the independent practice of licensed mental health counselors in the TRICARE program. The Department appreciates the opportunity to bring clarity to the role of licensed mental health counselors in the TRICARE program and your interest in expanding access to health care for our beneficiaries.

Sincerely,

Charles L. Rice, M.D.
President, Uniformed Services University of the Health Sciences
Performing the Duties of the Assistant Secretary of Defense (Health Affairs)

cc:
The Honorable Zach Wamp
Ranking Member