

Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

December 9, 2019

Admiral Karl L. Schultz
Commandant
U.S. Coast Guard
2703 Martin Luther King Jr. Avenue, S.E.
STOP #7000
Washington, D.C. 20593

Dear Admiral Schultz:

We have received the letter from Rear Admiral M. Bert, Director of Governmental and Public Affairs, dated December 5, 2019. We are disappointed that you remain unwilling to appear at the joint hearing between the Subcommittee on Transportation and Maritime Security of the Committee on Homeland Security and the Subcommittee on Civil Rights and Civil Liberties of the Committee on Oversight and Reform on December 11, 2019, despite our attempt to accommodate your schedule by delaying the hearing to that date.

In her letter, Rear Admiral Bert asserted that the scope and intent of the hearing has changed due to our invitations to two other witnesses to testify. In fact, the scope and intent of the hearing has not changed. The Committees' decision to invite additional witnesses who can provide valuable perspectives—and who would sit on a separate panel from you, as our staff has communicated—should not affect your willingness to appear at such an important hearing. As stated in our two previous letters, the hearing will discuss “the Coast Guard’s handling of complaints of bullying, harassment, and retaliation at the Coast Guard Academy, as well as the Academy’s responses to disparities identified in the Equity Scorecard review.” We never suggested you would be the only witness invited nor that discussion of bullying, harassment, and retaliation would be limited to “changes the Coast Guard has made to processes and policies,” as Rear Admiral Bert’s letter indicated. Rather, we communicated our belief that, as the Commandant of the Coast Guard, you should appear at the hearing without preconditions to provide the level of leadership and accountability sorely needed on these issues.

Your refusal to testify continues a troubling trend of impediments to congressional oversight. Rather than welcoming the opportunity to work with Congress to fully investigate what has transpired within the service, the Coast Guard has repeatedly obstructed our Committees' investigation. After stonewalling requests for nearly a year, the Coast Guard produced documents that remain heavily, inconsistently, and improperly redacted. The Coast Guard made officials available for transcribed interviews and other discussions only after our Committees indicated we would consider alternative means to obtain compliance.

Your refusal to testify only reinforces our concerns that Coast Guard leadership does not fully appreciate the gravity of what has occurred, and likely continues to occur, within the service.

Admiral Karl L. Schultz

Page 2

After reports of harassment, bullying, retaliation, and significant inequities within the Coast Guard raised our Committees' initial concerns, the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) Office of Inspector General (OIG) substantiated retaliation against Coast Guard whistleblowers on two separate occasions in little more than a year. Such substantiated cases of whistleblower retaliation are highly irregular, and we treat them with the utmost concern.

We understand you have offered to have Vice Admiral Michael F. McAllister, Deputy Commandant for Mission Support, testify in your stead. While we appreciate Vice Admiral McAllister's service, only you as the Commandant can address issues of harassment, bullying, retaliation, and inequity within the Coast Guard with the appropriate authority. These are not solely issues of mission support and personnel management; rather, they speak to the core values the Coast Guard holds and its ability to execute its mission effectively.

We all believe the Coast Guard's mission is critical to the national and economic security of the United States and that the service members and civil servants who make up the Coast Guard are its greatest assets. The Coast Guard can only fulfill its critical mission with a diverse workforce that reflects the public it serves and that can execute its functions without fear of harassment, bullying, reprisal, or otherwise unfair treatment. It is ultimately your responsibility as Commandant to ensure these issues are addressed properly. By refusing to appear at this week's hearing, you will be sending an unfortunate message to the Coast Guard, Congress, and the American public that you do not believe these issues are deserving of your testimony.

We continue to urge you to accept our invitation to appear before the Committees at this week's hearing.

Sincerely,



Bennie G. Thompson
Chairman
Committee on Homeland Security



Carolyn B. Maloney
Chairwoman
Committee on Oversight and Reform

cc: The Honorable Mike Rogers, Ranking Member
Committee on Homeland Security

The Honorable Jim Jordan, Ranking Member
Committee on Oversight and Reform