

May 15, 2025

The Honorable Tom Cole
Chairman
House Appropriations Committee
H-307, The U.S. Capitol
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Rosa DeLauro
Ranking Member
House Appropriations Committee
1036 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Chairman Cole and Ranking Member DeLauro:

Today, we write to express our support for a \$18.76 million Military Construction (MCON) project to construct a new Child Development Center (CDC) and outdoor playground area for children at the Naval Air Weapons Station (NAWS) - China Lake. This initiative aims to address the growing childcare demand for military personnel and authorized civilian residents at the base.

NAWS-China Lake's mission is provide quality shore-based infrastructure, base operating support services, and airfield support for a wide-range of joint missions to include Research, Development, Acquisition, Test and Evaluation (RDAT&E), advanced individual/unit level training, and other fleet and support activities. It houses the Navy's largest land range, over 1.4 million acres, which is instrumental in testing and development of both US Navy and other US weapon systems. The combination of NAWS-China Lake's location, complex and varied terrain, restricted airspace, widespread instrumentation sites, unique test capabilities, and highly skilled technical workforce provides the most advanced, and efficient method of conducting critical test, evaluation and training necessary to maintain technical standards in the Navy as well as other US military services.

NAWS-China Lake houses the Naval Air Warfare Center Weapons Division (NAWCWD), Air Test and Evaluation Squadron THREE ONE (VX-31), Air Test and Evaluation Squadron NINE (VX-9), Marine Aviation Detachment, Explosive Ordnance Disposal Detachments, NAVFAC Southwest China Lake Detachment, Naval Mobile Construction Battalion Detachments, Naval Munitions Command Detachment, Fleet Logistics Center Detachment, Fleet Readiness Center Detachment, Naval Regional Legal Service Office Detachment, and the Naval Branch Health Clinic. The current NAWS-China Lake Child Development Center (CDC) takes care of children for both active duty and civilian personnel of these different entities that test and evaluate land and air weapons systems vital to the warfighter and maintain operational readiness of forces.

The NAWS-China Lake CDC facility is a temporary pre-fabricated modular structure that has exceeded its intended lifespan. The aged temporary CDC facility is deteriorating and the annual repair costs required to ensure adequate health and safety conditions for the children and support staff continues to increase. Additionally, there are concerns that the facility may not comply with anti-terrorism/force protection (AT/FP) regulations, potentially placing children and staff at further risk.

The partnership between NAWS-China Lake, NAWCWD and the other hosted Command Units represents a stable source of economic, stimulus to the surrounding region in the form of good-paying jobs, housing and retail demand, local expenditures for supplies and support services, and related economic activity that ripples through a wide range of economic sectors. The majority of the local and regional economic benefits that can be attributed to the Navy's presence at NAWS-China Lake occur within the Region of Influence (ROI), encompassing portions of Kern, Inyo, and San Bernardino counties in the vicinity of the installation.

The construction of a new Child Development Center will not only enhance the quality of life for the children who's parents support our nation's defense, but it will also serve as an enticing draw for new scientists and engineers to the local community. For more than the last 80 years, NAWS-China Lake has been the home for innovated game-changing research, development, testing, and integration of warfighting capabilities that support our National Defense Strategy and have and need to continue to provide a tactical advantage to our nations fleet.

For these reasons and more, we strongly recommend your support of \$18.76 million for a new Child Development Center at NAWS-China Lake.

Sincerely,

Stephen Farmer
Executive Director
China Lake Alliance

Scott O'Neil
Executive Director
Indian Wells Valley EDC

Georgia Petropoulos
President and CEO
B3K Prosperity

Ron Strand
City Manager
City of Ridgecrest

Chris Ellis
Vice President and General Manager
Coso Operating Company

Rebecca McCourt
Executive Director
Ridgecrest Chamber of Commerce

Sean C. Hancock, Ed.D.
President
Cerro Coso Community College

Kari Crutcher
Executive Director
Ridgecrest Area Convention & Visitors Bureau

Joey Dosen
President
Ridgecrest Area Association of Realtors