

Junior Reserve Officers' Training Corps Safety Act of 2023
Senators Elizabeth Warren, Bernie Sanders, and Mazie Hirono

Background: The Junior Reserve Officers' Training Corps (JROTC) is one of the largest character development and citizenship programs for middle and high school students in the country. Following reports by the *New York Times* on extensive sexual misconduct of students by JROTC instructors, Senators Warren, Gillibrand, Blumenthal, and Hirono opened an [investigation](#) into the program. They [uncovered](#) 114 allegations of violence, abuse, or sexual harassment by instructors toward JROTC students, reflecting a lack of necessary oversight to prevent abuse. An additional *Times* investigation found “dozens of schools made the program mandatory or steered more than 75 percent of students in a single grade into the classes,” rather than running it as a voluntary elective, raising concerns that the implementation of this program may be violating students' civil rights by forcing them into JROTC programs with mandatory requirements. These reports are especially troubling given the JROTC program's heavy concentration in schools that serve communities of color and vulnerable students from low-income backgrounds. In response to these concerns, Senators Warren, Hirono, Sanders, and Wyden [wrote](#) to the Department of Defense (DoD) and Department of Education (ED), and DoD confirmed that it intends the JROTC Program to be voluntary. In May, Senator Warren and a bicameral group of colleagues sent a [letter](#) to the Government Accountability Office (GAO) urging GAO to conduct a review of the agencies' oversight of the JROTC program.

To help prevent further abuse of JROTC students, the *Junior Reserve Officers' Training Corps Safety Act of 2023* mandates:

- **Accountability for Schools that Fail to Report Abuse:** Schools failing to report allegations of sexual assault and harassment allowed those instructors to stay in place and hurt other students. DoD must suspend any JROTC unit that fails to notify DoD and ED of allegations that an instructor sexually harassed or assaulted a JROTC student within 48 hours after the school received the allegation.
- **Enhanced Reporting:** Many survivors of sexual assault are afraid to come forward to report abuse. DoD must conduct climate surveys to better understand and address discrimination in JROTC programs;
- **Clear Processes to Report Civil Rights Violations:** There is not a clear and consistent understanding of JROTC students' rights. DoD must certify that any school with a JROTC program has a process for students to report Title IX violations and training for students on sexual assault and harassment prevention and reporting;
- **Standardized Annual Reports on Abuse:** Until recent investigations, there has been no reporting to Congress or the public about known violations of students' rights. DoD and ED must submit annual reports on discrimination and harassment in JROTC programs and the programs' policies and compliance on preventing harassment and discrimination;
- **An End to Mandatory Enrollment in JROTC:** Investigations revealed schools have forced students to participate in JROTC. Under this bill, schools may not enroll students without informed consent and DoD must suspend units forcing students into JROTC; and
- **Increased Oversight of Agency Efforts to Prevent Abuse:** The Government Accountability Office must submit a report to Congress on the bill's implementation and DoD and ED efforts to prevent sexual violence in JROTC.