

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

October 20, 2025

The Honorable Pete Hegseth
Secretary of Defense
Department of Defense
1400 Defense Pentagon
Washington, DC 20301

Dave Steiner
Postmaster General
United States Postal Service
475 L'Enfant Plaza, SW
Washington, DC 20260

Amber McReynolds
Chair, Postal Board of Governors
United States Postal Service
475 L'Enfant Plaza, SW
Washington, DC 20260

Rodney Scott
Commissioner
U.S. Customs and Border Protection
1300 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20229

Dear Secretary Hegseth, Postmaster General Steiner, Chair McReynolds, Commissioner Scott,

As the 2025 holiday season approaches, a new international postal policy is threatening to cut off personalized care packages to U.S. service members overseas. This new policy is burdening the numerous nonprofit organizations that provide personalized care packages to our troops stationed overseas, creating unnavigable reporting requirements that have significantly hindered their operations. I write today to urge the U.S. Department of Defense (DoD) and United States Postal Service (USPS) to find a workable solution for organizations across the country that provide care packages to service members.

On September 1, 2025, USPS issued new regulations updating mailing standards in order to comply with Universal Postal Union (UPU) requirements. Under the new regulations, military care package organizations here in Massachusetts and in other states must provide custom six-digit Harmonized Schedule (HS) codes specifically bound to the weight, country of origin, and cost for each item in each care package. Packages that do not meet these strict requirements may

be returned, at the shipper's expense. This level of reporting makes tailored, fast-turn packing events unworkable and threatens to shut down organizations that have supported our troops and their families for decades.

Constituents from military service organizations across Massachusetts — including leaders from Operation American Solider in Watertown; Operation Troop Support in Danvers; and Adopt A Platoon Southie Style in South Boston — have raised concerns with my office about the detrimental impact of these new regulations. These organizations serve countless servicemembers and families stationed at U.S. military bases around the world, assembling and shipping custom care packages overseas. The care packages include personal handwritten letters, toiletries, snacks, and other goods customized and addressed to individual servicemembers. But the changed regulations are disrupting the shipment of care packages to our servicemembers, as organizations experience backlogs, delays, and unforeseen expenses in their operations. Troops who once received a personalized box may now receive delayed substitutes that lack necessary items, or nothing at all. Organizations that could previously send hundreds of unique packages at once are now limited to sending fewer than 10, and are reportedly assuming additional costs to resend returned packages.

On October 3, 2025, I received a response to my repeated inquiries to USPS on this matter. In its response, USPS explained that it made these policy changes to comply with UPU regulations at the international level and Stay of Forces Agreements negotiated by the Department of Defense. I appreciate USPS's dedication to overseas military personnel and recognize the necessity of standardizing international shipping requirements. But USPS regulations already provide exceptions for overseas care packages through exemptions from customs duties and taxes. I urge you to expand these exceptions and exempt this type of mail from HS code requirements.

If DoD and USPS fail to take action, U.S. military personnel and their families may not receive support from care package organizations. Throughout our nation's history—in times of conflict and in times of peace—local organizations, individual communities, and ordinary volunteers have always pitched in to care for U.S. military members abroad. I call upon you to help maintain this sacred tradition. Those who serve our country deserve the utmost care not only from our government, but also from local organizations across the United States dedicated to serving our troops.

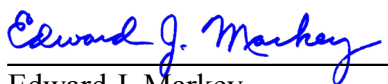
For all these reasons, I respectfully request that USPS consider adopting the following mitigation procedures. Please advise me in writing by November 15, 2025 whether USPS is able to take these steps:

- Order a 180-day enforcement delay for 501(c)(3) humanitarian shipments to foreign service members.

- Create a “Humanitarian Care Package” template that eases compliance with the new USPS regulations. Specifically, this template would:
 - allow for the most basic HS codes from plain-language descriptions;
 - allow category-level listing for low-value consumables and apparel;
 - accept a consolidated manifest for food items, hygiene-related items, and other similar items, instead of requiring manual entry of every unique item.
- Publish clear guidance and substitution rules (e.g., alcohol-free wipes for sanitizer).
- Preserve flat rate pricing and free Priority Mailboxes.

Thank you for your time and attention to this matter.

Sincerely,



Edward J. Markey
United States Senator