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December 18, 2025

Dane Hughes
Department of War
Office of the Assistant Secretary of War for Legislative Affairs
1300 Defense Pentagon
Washington, DC 20301-1000

RE: AADA Follow-Up Comments on Revised Military Shaving Waiver Policies

Dear Mr. Hughes,

On behalf of the American Academy of Dermatology Association (AADA), we write to reiterate our appreciation to the United States Department of War (DoW) for its continued dedication to maintaining a strong and capable military force. Since submitting our meeting request in September, **we have remained concerned that recent revisions to shaving waiver policies implemented across military branches—including those updated as recently as October 2025—may adversely affect service members with pseudofolliculitis barbae (PFB) and other related skin conditions. The revised policies, which include more restrictive criteria for granting and maintaining shaving waivers risk further exacerbating disease severity and may negatively impact military personnel’s performance, health, and career progression.**^{1, 2, 3, 4} We respectfully request a meeting with the DoW to discuss evidence-

¹ Department of the Airforce, Dept. of the Airforce Guidance Memorandum to DAFI 36-2903, “Dress and Personal Appearance of Department of the Airforce Personnel” (October 29, 2025). https://www.af.mil/Portals/1/documents/2025SAF/Atch_1_-_DAFGM_36-2903_-_Approved_29_Oct_25.pdf?

² MARADMIN Number: 124/25, “Uniform and Grooming Standards for Medical Conditions” (March 13, 2025). <https://www.marines.mil/News/Messages/Messages-Display/Article/4119098/uniform-and-grooming-standards-for-medical-conditions/>

³ Secretary of the Army, Army Directive 2025-18 (Appearance, Grooming, and Army Body Composition Program Standards) (September 12, 2025). <https://api.army.mil/e2/c/downloads/2025/09/15/ec778b9b/arn45095-army-dir-2025-18-000-web-1.pdf>

⁴ Secretary of Defense, “Grooming Standards for Facial Hair” (August 20, 2025). <https://media.defense.gov/2025/Sep/15/2003799859/-1/-1/1/GROOMING-STANDARDS-FOR-FACIAL-HAIR.PDF>

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based solutions that support optimal care for service members affected by PFB and related conditions.

As the leading society in dermatological care, representing nearly 17,500 dermatologists nationwide, the AADA is committed to excellence in the medical and surgical treatment of skin disease; advocating for high standards in clinical practice, education, and research in dermatology; and driving continuous improvement in patient care and outcomes while reducing the burden of skin disease.

PFB or “razor bumps” is a common and painful condition that is triggered by shaving, most frequently diagnosed among individuals with curly hair, and one of the most prevalent dermatologic conditions in the Armed Forces.⁵ The condition often requires long-term military shaving waivers in addition to laser hair removal when conservative measures such as topical retinoids, antibiotics, and improved grooming techniques fail.⁶

Without proper management, PFB can lead to pustules, keloids, scarring, and psychosocial distress, and effective care management necessitates ongoing, personalized dermatologic care management including access to topical therapies or laser hair removal, as well as the ability to discontinue shaving, which remains the most effective form of treatment.⁷

Limited access to dermatologists and short-term shaving waiver policies that require frequent renewals hinder timely, effective care and may exacerbate symptoms of PFB and related skin conditions. To support service members’ health and military readiness, expanding access to board-certified dermatologic care and improving consistency in grooming policies is essential to ensuring consistent evidence-based grooming standards are comprehensive and effectively protect the health and wellbeing of all service members. In addition, it is imperative that service members receive enhanced access to dermatologists and dermatological care through the Military Health System, Veteran Affairs Hospitals, and external healthcare networks, to ensure service members receive the most effective treatments for PFB. The repetitive renewal of short-term shaving waivers imposes unnecessary burdens, including frequent medical appointments, increased administrative complexity, and repeated evaluation of an incurable chronic skin condition, resulting in significant career and performance consequences.

⁵ Jung, Injae, et al. "Treatment and Current Policies on Pseudofolliculitis Barbae in the US Military." *Cutis* 112.6 (2023).

⁶ Kligman AM, Mills OH. Pseudofolliculitis of the Beard and Topically Applied Tretinoin. *Arch Dermatol.* 1973;107(4):551–552. doi:10.1001/archderm.1973.01620190027006

⁷ Tshudy MT, Cho S, Pseudofolliculitis Barbae in the U.S. Military, a Review, *Military Medicine*, Volume 186, Issue 1-2, January-February 2021, Pages e52–e57. <https://doi.org/10.1093/milmed/usaa243>

We would appreciate the opportunity to meet with you to discuss grooming standards that uphold military professionalism and safeguard the health of service members across all branches. Moreover, we wish to express our continued concern that tightening or revising military grooming policies without careful consideration of dermatologic care and evidence-based research could lead to an increase in skin complications among affected military personnel. We are available to meet:

- **Friday, January 23:** 2:30–3:30 PM ET
- **Monday, February 2:** 10:00–11:00 AM ET; 12:00–1:00 PM ET; 2:30–3:30 PM ET
- **Friday, February 6:** 12:00–1:00 PM ET; 2:30–3:30 PM ET; 3:00–4:00 PM ET

For additional information or to schedule a meeting, please contact Karry La Violette, Senior Vice President of Advocacy & Policy, at klaviolette@aad.org.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Susan C. Taylor MD, FAAD". The signature is written in dark ink and is positioned above the printed name and title.

Susan C. Taylor, MD, FAAD
President, American Academy of Dermatology Association