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BRAC Commission
2521 South Clark Street
Suite 600
Arlington, VA 22202

Dear members of the BRAC Commission,

It is with great distress that I write to you today as I consider what impact the closure of Cannon Air Force Base will have on Clovis, New Mexico and the surrounding areas. I feel a sense of urgency in responding to the news that the military installation here will close as I sit here and assess what devastating results will ensue for the people served by the agency I work for and for the community of Clovis.

I have to admit, I am like many who thought Cannon was in no danger of closure and was not mentally prepared for the news. Now that the list has been announced I must at least do my part in attempting to bring information to you in order that you may make note of the catastrophic impact that such a closure will have on so many of us in this community.

First, allow me to tell you about the company I work for. We serve individuals who experience either physical or developmental disabilities (mental retardation), and sometimes both. One of our greatest missions here at ENMRSH Inc. is to provide assistance and support in the quest for quality of life of the individuals we serve. One of the ways we assist in that endeavor is through supported employment opportunities. ENMRSH, Inc has had the great fortune to be involved with Cannon Air Force Base and many of the individuals we serve enjoy employment because of the contract between ENMRSH, Inc. and CAFB. That employment opportunity has afforded them the chance to be independent with some measure of financial security. If the base were to close, the individuals will no longer have a job. They will be competing with many others for the scarce jobs that will be available in this community. Some of them will experience hardship and a severely reduced standard of living. Some will even have to leave the area because of it. The impact will not only be financial, but will affect confidence and self esteem of the individuals as well. For many of them, the base closure will mean a loss of the life they have worked so meticulously and diligently to build.

No only will we see this within the agency I work for, but will experience severe negative economic impact on the community as a whole. This is one of the closest knit communities you will find, and often the military families who live at CAFB have expressed the sentiment that they have never felt as welcome as they do in Clovis. While we would like to think that nothing could break the bonds of this community, the economic devastation of a closure of CAFB would affect the community in such a significant way as to undermine the strength of the community as a whole. This attitude might seem unbelievable to those who have not experienced such a bond that Clovis shares with CAFB, but we have walked hand in hand for so long with CAFB that we depend on each other. We helped them, they helped us, and together we grew, thrived, and became the strong community you will see before you when you visit this location.

I know I am supposed to be writing of encroachment, ideal flying weather, and the importance of our role in national defense and security, but what I want you to hear from me is the voice of the people who depend on this community and CAFB for their livelihood. Of course I know the items I just mentioned are important, but you know about those things already. What we implore you to consider are the people this impacts, not just facts and figures you see on a piece of paper. Common everyday folks who make this community and this country what it is today. We look forward to your visit to the area and welcome your scrutiny. We are confident you will be fair in your evaluation of the merits of keeping CAFB, and are certain that you will see the value of things remaining the way they are.

Thank you so much for your time in reading and considering my words today. For those of you on the committee who have served this country you have my undying gratitude and admiration for the dedication you have shown in the past and continue to exhibit even now. My wish for you is strength and clarity as you undertake the magnificent task of making the decisions you are now engaged in making.

Sincerely,

Cathy Olona
Training Coordinator
ENMRSH, Inc.