



OFFICE OF THE ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF DEFENSE
1500 DEFENSE PENTAGON
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20301-1500

MANPOWER AND
RESERVE AFFAIRS

February 14, 2020

The Honorable Anne R. Kaiser
Chair
House Ways and Means Committee
House Office Building, Room 131
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

RE: HB 503 – Primary and Secondary Schools - Dependent Children of Service Members -
Enrollment and Documentation Requirements

Chair Kaiser and Members of the Committee:

On behalf of military families and the Department of Defense, I am writing to express support for the policy changes proposed in HB 503, a bill that addresses kindergarten through twelfth grade (K-12) enrollment and course registration access for children of military families.

My name is Harold Cooney and I am the Northeast Regional Liaison for the Defense-State Liaison Office, operating under the direction of Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness, and the Deputy Assistant Secretary for Military Community and Family Policy. Our mission is to be a resource to state policymakers as they work to address quality of life issues of military families.

Approximately 185,000 U.S. military children move between schools annually. Military service members are routinely reassigned to new duty stations, due to mission and training requirements. As a result of these moves, they may potentially miss their child's school registration and other important application dates that occur in the spring. Long-term negative impacts include having to shift their planned courses of study, which may require them to take courses in summer school, or even force them to graduate later than their peers.

Service members typically receive official military orders detailing their upcoming assignment 30 days to 6 months prior to their move. Allowing military families to enroll their children in school, register for classes and apply for specialized programs at the same time as their peers, prior to physically arriving to their location, will help to facilitate their uninterrupted educational progress and smooth integration into their new communities, and relieve unneeded stress during their transition between locations.

With nearly 21,000 active duty military school-age children attending school in this state, Maryland is in a unique position to have a positive effect on the educational experiences of military children and families. No new online systems are required and there is added benefit to school districts by reducing the discrepancy between projected and actual student enrollment numbers for staffing purposes.

While similar, this issue is not addressed by the Interstate Compact on Educational Opportunity for Military Children which Maryland joined in 2009. The Compact requires school districts to place the student once they arrive, but doesn't require them to accommodate the student if the class is full. The intent of this policy is not to offer an advantage or priority over other students, but simply to provide military families to enroll in educational programs and courses at the same time as their in-state peers.

Currently 15 states have incorporated language and 9 states have introduced bills with policy language to address this issue. We ask that Maryland consider this helpful policy language change, as well.

In closing, we are grateful for the tremendous efforts that Maryland has historically made to support our military members and their families. We appreciate the opportunity to support the policy reflected in HB 503 and are especially grateful to Delegate Valentino-Smith for introducing this important piece of legislation. Thank you for taking the time to consider this issue. Please feel free to contact me with any questions you may have.

Sincerely,



Harold E. Cooney
Northeast Regional Liaison
Defense-State Liaison Office
Office of the Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense
(Military Community and Family Policy)

CC: Delegate Geraldine Valentino-Smith