



**DEPARTMENT OF THE AIR FORCE  
HEADQUARTERS 316TH WING (AFDW)  
JOINT BASE ANDREWS, MARYLAND 20762**

1 February 2022

Mrs. Sunny Lee  
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Delegate Vanessa E. Atterbeary  
Room 131  
House Office Building  
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

Support of: HB 277 – Public Schools - Purple Star Schools Program - Establishment

Dear Delegate Atterbeary:

Joint Base Andrews and the United States Air Force welcome the opportunity to comment on the importance of Maryland House Bill 277 that will establish the Purple Star Schools program in Maryland. The Joint Base Andrews School Liaison Program Manager, Mrs. Sunny Lee, provides her personal and professional testimony in support of HB 277.

The state of Maryland serves as a home to over 29,000 military connected students. On average, a military-connected student will attend six to nine different schools before they graduate. My daughter alone has been to five different schools; she's only in the fourth grade.

As an active duty military spouse and a proud parent of two school-aged children, I know first-hand the stress and anxiety a military family experiences during a move especially related to our children attending a new school. Will my children feel welcomed at their new school? Will they fit in? Will they have to repeat courses? How long will it take for them to adjust to the new community?

Reducing the stress and anxiety of a permanent change of station (PCS) move, education for military-connected students is an important factor that can have a direct effect on the military member's quality of life leading to potential impacts on their mission readiness. Military members need assurance that their children are taken care of so that they can dedicate their focus to the mission.

My mission as a School Liaison is to make sure that military families receive resources, establish connections, and my assistance that helps provide them with focus and stability during their transition to Joint Base Andrews.

When military-connected students move to a new school, they face numerous challenges, including potentially encountering different graduation requirements or course placement disruption. Not only do they face academic challenges, but every move can also bring social and emotional challenges as well; including leaving established support systems behind, and having to make new friends while adjusting to a new community.

Establishing the Purple Star School program in Maryland is important as it will require schools to provide opportunities and support for the unique situations faced by military-connected students and their families. The program will help military-connected students with peer transition support and establishing social and emotional connections at their new school; helping them feel welcomed into their new environment and quickly resume a sense of normalcy.

This Purple Star School Legislation will provide awareness to teachers, faculty, and the overall school community regarding the unique military culture affecting the military-connected students attending their schools to help them provide improved support. Enacting this Purple Star School Legislation demonstrates a commitment from the state of Maryland to our military families, emphasizing that the state as a whole values and understands the military culture and supports and encourages a positive educational environment for our military-connected children.

Specific to Joint Base Andrews, the more than 5,000 military-connected students who attend over 200 schools in Prince George's County will benefit from the state's establishment of a Purple Star Program. Their schools' teachers, staff, and other students and parents will have more information on what it means to be a student from a military family and identify, perhaps earlier, the needs of military connected students. This program could also help improve the relationships between JBA and the community through the County's schools, local government agencies, and other education related organizations.

Thank you for the opportunity for Joint Base Andrews to provide testimony on this very important and impactful bill. We look forward to a successful outcome for HB 277 that establishes the Purple Star Schools program here in Maryland.

Respectfully,

SUNNY LEE, GS-11, DAF  
School Liaison