



...for the sake of the child

909 Mountain Lion Circle, Harker Heights, TX 76548 • (254) 953-1923 • (254) 953-1925 fax • www.MilitaryChild.org • CFC #10261

April 13, 2018

The Honorable John McCain
Chair, Senate Armed Services Committee
United States House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Jack Reed
Ranking Member, Senate Armed Services Committee
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Lamar Alexander
Chair, Senate Health, Education, Labor and Pensions Committee
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Patty Murray
Ranking Member, Senate Health, Education, Labor and Pensions Committee
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairmen McCain and Alexander and Ranking Members Reed and Murray:

For almost twenty years, the **Military Child Education Coalition (MCEC)** has remained focused exclusively on the well-being and needs of America's almost four million military and veteran-connected children, specifically in the areas of academic opportunity and excellence, school transition support, and developmental needs. Our goal is to ensure that every child grows and thrives through good and challenging times in order to be college, workforce, and ultimately, life-ready. Staying true to our mission, the MCEC **does not support** the ***Education Savings Accounts for Military Families Act***. This act, though well intended, wrongly strips away essential Impact Aid funding from local education agencies (LEA) that teach and support our military-connected children to create educational savings accounts (ESA) that would benefit only a very small number of military families.

Impact Aid, created and supported by a bi-partisan Congress since 1950, provides over 1,200 school districts with direct and flexible funding in lieu of lost local tax revenue due to tax-exempt federal property being within the school district's boundaries. Diverting federal Impact Aid dollars away from LEAs runs contrary to the Congressional intent of the Impact Aid Program of providing funding support where the federal impact and the tax revenue loss is the most significant. With approximately 80% of our military-connected students attending public schools in proximity to federal properties, any loss of Impact Aid funding to the LEA's general operating budgets will put at risk the LEA's ability to sustain quality educational programming and support services for not only

McCain, Reed, Alexander, Murray

April 13, 2018

Page 2

military-connected students, but to all students. This is especially true for those school districts identified as “heavily impacted,” who serve a high percentage of federally connected students with a limited, in some cases, non-existent local tax base.

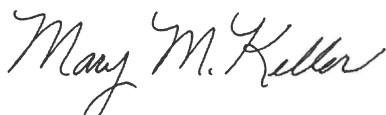
There is no equity for all military families with school-aged children in the proposed Education Savings Accounts for Military Families Act. Not every military family will be eligible to apply for an ESA as the proposed legislation is written. This Act will create amongst military families the “haves” and the “have-nots,” those who are eligible and those who are not, thus creating additional stress for families deciding on next duty station locations. Even for those families that are eligible for an ESA, they will be sub-grouped by an annual account value of either \$4,500 or \$2,500, based on their residency location, neither of which is a sufficient amount to fully fund alternatives to public education. Shifting federal funds that serve the vast majority of military families to ESAs that will minimally serve a very select few of eligible military families in our view seems counterintuitive.

The MCEC has always and will continue to advocate for informed school choices and options by military parents for their children. There are very real instances where alternatives to public schooling is in the best interest of the military-connected student. Offering financial assistance to military families to offset non-public school education alternatives in these instances would undoubtedly be needed and welcomed by military families. However, using the federal Impact Aid program as the funding source to support school choice options for military families is not the solution. With six states already employing ESAs, there are other alternatives that must be explored rather than “robbing Peter to pay Paul.”

Thank you in advance for your favorable consideration of our MCEC position on this important issue. If we can be of any assistance in your efforts to support military-connected children or if you have any questions or need further information, please contact John Ballantyne at (254) 953-1923 ext. 1124 or John.Ballantyne@MilitaryChild.org.

The Military Child Education Coalition (MCEC) is a 501(c)(3) global, nonprofit organization focused exclusively on the well-being and needs of America’s approximately four million military-connected children, specifically in the areas of academic opportunity and excellence, school transition support, and developmental needs. Our goal is to ensure that every military-connected child grows and thrives through good and challenging times in order to be college, workforce, and ultimately, life-ready.

Very Respectfully,



Mary M. Keller, Ed.D.
President and Chief Executive Officer
Military Child Education Coalition