

## **NCPE Opposes the Sasse Amendment #420**

*The Sasse Amendment #420 would redirect dollars away from the Department of Defense Impact Aid Program for Military Connected School Districts, which serves only military-connected LEAs. The DoD Impact Aid programs reimburse school districts for the loss of tax revenue due to the presence of non-taxable land such as a military installation. The DoD Impact Aid Supplemental Program provides \$30 million in financial assistance to LEAs that have a high concentration of military connected students. Specifically, the Sasse Amendment would cut funding by \$15 million, which would be a reduction of 50% for districts. To be eligible for the supplemental, LEAs must be heavily reliant on Impact Aid funding and have at least 20% average daily attendance of military dependent students in the preceding year, as counted on their Federal Impact Aid application.*

### **The Sasse Amendment Would Hurt Military-Connected Students Who Remain in Public Schools**

- Vouchers will funnel dollars away from the public schools that are equipped to serve military families. 80% of military-connected students attend public schools. The school districts serving these students understand that education is a quality of life issue for military families and understand their unique challenges, particularly related to parental deployment and mobility, and offer the academic and emotional supports necessary to support these students. Private schools educating a few military-connected students may not be well-equipped to provide similar services. They also have additional protections in the public schools that don't exist in private schools, including the Military Interstate Children's Compact, which is an agreement among the 50 states that "addresses key educational transition issues encountered by military families including enrollment, placement, attendance, eligibility and graduation."

### **Funds Are Better Spent Supporting Schools Districts Than Through a New Voucher Program**

- 80% of military-connected students attend public schools and the both the Basic Support Grant Impact Aid program and the DoD Impact Aid supplemental dedicate much needed resources to districts with a high proportion of students who are military-connected. Impact Aid has not been fully funded since 1969 and current funding levels are meeting only 56-percent of need. A better use of these dollars would be to fully fund Impact Aid. Greater federal investment in programs that provide school districts with the resources they need to serve any and all military-connected children who walk through their doors would go a long way toward restoring the erosion of funds due to stagnant appropriations, ease the burden on local taxpayers, and ultimately benefit all students, including military connected students, in the school district.

## **The Sasse Amendments Presents Major Administrative Challenges for Highly-Mobile Families**

- Military children will, on average, attend between six and nine schools from grades K-12.<sup>1</sup> The high mobility rate of this population makes the implementation of a voucher impractical for both students and school districts. The requirement that a child qualifies only if they attended a school district that was heavily impacted the previous year or lived on base while attending a public school district the previous year makes no sense given the frequency of moves. A child may only be eligible for a voucher for a single year since it's not clear that just attending a public school district for one year that receives DoD Impact Aid would allow for eligibility in perpetuity. Instead, it's much more likely that educational instability would be furthered by this program since families would be sliding in and out of eligibility as they move from one district to another. Given how mobile military families are, it will be especially difficult to ensure that dollars are captured and recouped when students leave a school year mid-year.

## **This Amendment Would Not Practically Increase Educational Choices for Families**

- Families already have the option to homeschool or choose an alternative school for their children, whether or not they reside on or off a military installation. Children aren't assigned to a school district and families don't have to live on a military installation. They can choose to live anywhere in the community.
- Furthermore, there's no guarantee that if a family wants to use a voucher to attend a private school that the private school will choose to educate their child. Private schools can reject students for a variety of reasons: academics, religion, disability status, inability to pay full tuition, lack of transportation, discipline history, language proficiency, LGBT status, etc. In addition, most vouchers do not cover the full cost of attending a private school. There are no guarantees that the private school would pick up the difference in cost between the voucher and the cost of educating students, including students with disabilities, leaving the remainder up to the family.

## **This Amendment Would Privilege Certain Military-Connected Students**

- Eligible students covered by this legislation are those who attend public schools either in heavily impacted districts or if not heavily impacted, who currently live on military installations. In most cases, families are not forced to live on military installations; they choose to do so because it offers more convenience, better housing quality, or the quality of the schools, etc. Many families may want to live on the installation, but there's a waiting list. This educational divide would undermine military cohesion among those serving as well weaken the bonds between the military and civilian community.

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<sup>1</sup> National Military Family Association: <http://www.militaryfamily.org/get-info/military-kids/education/>