

March 14, 2018

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

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

The Honorable John McCain
Chair, Senate Armed Services
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

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

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

The National Military Family Association has long been an advocate for improving the quality of life of our military family members, who have sacrificed greatly in support of our Nation. For that reason, our Association opposes S. 2517, the *Education Savings Accounts for Military Families Act*, which would divert much needed funding from Impact Aid to create vouchers for a subset of military-connected children.

The majority of our Nation's military-connected children – up to 80 percent – attend public schools in their local civilian communities. Many of those schools rely on Impact Aid to make up for property tax revenue lost due to the presence of federal land within their districts. Impact Aid is a critical funding stream for schools serving military-connected children, allowing them to provide the high quality education our military families need and deserve. Reducing Impact Aid funding would be financially devastating to many military-impacted schools, putting the education of both military children and their civilian classmates at risk.

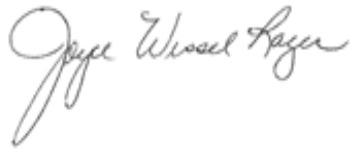
In addition, by creating Education Savings Accounts (ESAs) for only a subset of military-connected children, this legislation would create an unacceptable system of haves and have-nots. Furthermore, many of the families who would be eligible for the program would receive ESAs of only \$2500 – not nearly enough to cover their child's educational expenses. We are concerned that military families would be left holding the bag when tuition costs exceed the amount available to them through the ESA. It seems counterproductive to divert funding from schools serving the majority of military-connected children in order to create a benefit of questionable value that would help only a few.

Finally, we note that several states have created ESAs and included provisions allowing military children to participate. We are grateful to those states who have extended this opportunity to the military children whose families are stationed there. There are ways to offer school choice to military families without diverting funding from an essential program that has long enjoyed bipartisan support.

Thank you for your consideration. If we can be of assistance in your efforts to support military families or if you have any questions or need further information, please contact Eileen Huck in our Government Relations Department at (703) 931-6632 or EHuck@militaryfamily.org.

The National Military Family Association is the leading nonprofit dedicated to serving the families who stand behind the uniform. Since 1969, NMFA has worked to strengthen and protect millions of families through its advocacy and programs. We provide spouse scholarships, camps for military kids, and retreats for families reconnecting after deployment and for the families of the wounded, ill, or injured. NMFA serves the families of the currently serving, retired, wounded or fallen members of the Army, Navy, Marine Corps, Air Force, Coast Guard, and Commissioned Corps of the USPHS and NOAA. To get involved or to learn more, visit www.MilitaryFamily.org.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Joyce Wessel Raezer". The ink is dark and the signature is fluid, with a large initial "J" and a long, sweeping underline.

Joyce Wessel Raezer
Executive Director