

Vouchers for Military-Connected Students Erode Military Families' Protections & Threaten Impact Aid Funding

VOUCHERS UNDERMINE SUPPORT FOR MILITARY-CONNECTED STUDENTS

- Education is a quality-of-life issue for military families that helps to maintain an all-volunteer force. Private school vouchers would undermine many of the supports that school districts, states, and federal agencies have put in place to support the unique needs of military connected students.
- Military families are highly mobile. Military connected students will attend, on average, six to nine schools before high school graduation. For this reason, instituting a voucher program is impracticable.
- Military families, by attending a non-public school, would forfeit certain benefits. For example, the Military Interstate Children's Compact is an agreement among states and school districts that "addresses key educational transition issues encountered by military families including enrollment, placement, attendance, eligibility, and graduation." The compact, adopted by all 50 states and DC, does not extend to non-public schools.

VOUCHERS FOR MILITARY-CONNECTED STUDENTS REDUCE IMPACT AID FUNDING

- Those school districts serving military dependent children, and the students themselves, face unique challenges such as the emotional stress that children and families face when a parent is deployed. These challenges are recognized by public school districts, which offer a complex system of support, including professional development for school counselors, to ensure a safe and healthy learning environment. A voucher program for military families would reduce funding for Impact Aid - which provides a payment to school districts with concentrations of federally-connected students – for public school districts near military installations.
- Rather than diverting federal funding to non-public schools, the federal government should increase Impact Aid funding, which is currently funded only at 55-percent of need. Any direct or indirect erosion of Impact Aid through a voucher program will reduce the Impact Aid funding currently going to these districts, and would also place a great financial burden on the local community, which would be left to fund public schools with an already low level of state and local tax revenue.

STUDENTS USING PRIVATE SCHOOL VOUCHERS FORFEIT CERTAIN RIGHTS AND BENEFITS

- Private schools that are eligible to take vouchers do not abide by key provisions in civil rights laws. These schools do not face the same public accountability standards as public schools, including those in Titles VI and IX of the Civil Rights Act, the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act, and the Every Student Succeeds Act. And, students who attend private schools using vouchers are stripped of the First Amendment, due process, and other constitutional and statutory rights guaranteed to them in public schools.
- Military families also forego protected rights when they use a voucher. Students who leave the public schools with a voucher are considered to be parentally placed in the private school, and thus forfeit many of the protections provided to students under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), including a Free Appropriate Public Education (FAPE). Students accepting vouchers would not necessarily receive all of the services listed on their individualized education plans (IEPs) that they are currently receiving in their public school.

1. Military Interstate Children's Compact Commission, About MIC3, <http://mic3.net/pages/About/about.aspx>.