



17 January 2017

The Honorable Lamar Alexander
United States Senate
428 Senate Dirksen Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Patty Murray
United States Senate
428 Senate Dirksen Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Alexander and Ranking Member Murray:

The below associations would like your assistance with an inquiry to Ms. Betsy DeVos during her nomination hearing as it relates to supporting Guard and Reserve school children. In the 114th the Senate proposed language in the “*Every Child Achieves Act of 2015*” to include children of Guard and Reserve parents in the information on academic achievement as part of state report cards. In the final bill titled, “*Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA)*” the provision for inclusion of Guard and Reserve children was dropped from the version passed into law (Public Law 114-95).

We believe the student identifier should be reported on military-connected students regardless of the military status of their parent. The premise of a military student identifier is to be able to identify the needed resources for military dependent students because of the constellation of challenges they face – high mobility, repeated separations and transitions. A study of stress and coping found military children experience being anxious, worry often, and cry more frequently. Children of Guard and Reserve members are certainly not immune to these issues. The 2014 Defense Department Demographics Report indicates there are more than 500,000 military-connected school-aged students of the National Guard and Reserves. They reside in all fifty states and most territories, yet are almost hidden from public recognition as being from a military family.

The Guard and Reserve have increasingly been used to augment the active component. Since 9/11 more than 938,000 Guard and Reserve members have been activated, which has placed a tremendous strain on their children and families. One Air Force Reservist who deployed recalls her daughter “withdrawing from her friends...Her grades dropped and she cried all the time at school.” Unlike their active-duty counterparts, these children often live off-base away from many support services, making it harder to access resources to assist them.

Despite the drawdown of U.S. forces in Afghanistan and Iraq, the Reserve Component continues to face an elevated operations tempo with man-days per year increasing to 17.3 million from 13 million before 9/11. The National Guard routinely deploys within their respective state in response to state emergencies, directives, or while in training. While not an overseas deployment, “gone is gone” for a child of a service member and regardless of the reason for the parental absence, these children live with continual stressors and transition adjustments that their civilian classmates do not experience.

Additionally, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) and the United States Public Health Service (USPHS) have servicemembers with families who face identical struggles with fewer supports.

Our associations have a membership which represents all the uniformed services of the United States. Including all uniformed service children, with Guard and Reserve children as a separate identifier, would help schools, district, the military services and non-profit groups better focus needed resources. Without

data on military-connected students, it is difficult to determine how our children are performing and where policies or resources are needed to help them. Our associations would like the Department of Education to encourage states to identify our cohort of students until a technical legislative proposal passes. If these children aren't counted . . . they don't count!

QUESTIONS FOR NOMINATION HEARING

National Guard and Reserve servicemembers have mobilized for more than a decade to protect the nation against terrorist threats and they will continue to serve away from home, domestically and overseas. NOAA and Public Health Service officers also deploy globally to protect our health and environment. The “*Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA)*” recognizes that our military-connected children experience additional stress when their parent is called to duty at home and abroad. The children of Guard and Reserve, NOAA and USPHS members bear the same burden as their active duty armed force counterparts. For the child, gone is gone.

- How can the Department of Education support our Reserve Component, NOAA and USPHS students to help them become college, workforce and life-ready, despite the challenges of a military lifestyle?
- Do you support the inclusion of the children of National Guard and Reserve members in the military student identifier provision in the “*Every Student Succeeds Act?*”

Supported by:

Enlisted Association of the National Guard of the United States
Military Child Education Coalition
Military Officer Association of America
National Guard Association of the United States
Reserve Officers Association
The Retired Enlisted Association
United States Army Warrant Officers Association