



Committee on Armed Services
Subcommittee on Personnel
U.S. Senate
Washington, DC 20510

July 28, 2025

Dear Chairman Tuberville:

On behalf of Military Families in Support of Parental Rights, which includes former and current DoDEA parents, educators, and employees, military spouses, veterans with military grandkids, and DoD civilians, we would like to express our support and opposition to various provisions in the House and Senate committee-passed versions of the FY26 National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA).

Cell Phone Policies, Childcare, Eliminating Barriers to Military Service, Child Protection

We support Rep. Stefanik's language to require a report on DoDEA's current cell phone policies and the effects of cell phone use in dependents schools. Likewise, we support language included by Reps. Jackson and Mace with the aim of improving childcare at military installations, and we are encouraged to see Rep. Tokuda's provision to require notification to parents and Congress of abuse in DoD child and youth programs within 24 hours and 72 hours, respectively. Rep. Kiggans's language to prohibit disqualification from military service based solely on resolved childhood diagnoses is a much-needed provision. In the SASC-passed bill, we support the Slotkin/Banks cell phone language. We also support Section 531, which requires Sec. Hegseth to provide notification to the military community of sex offenders who live on or have access to military bases.

Impact Aid

In regard to Impact Aid, while we believe it would be better to give these funds directly to families via education savings accounts that can follow the child, it is imperative that public schools are held accountable for funds they are given and that these funds are used expressly for the purposes Congress has stipulated vs. just being funneled into a school district's general fund. We are concerned that free money available to school districts via Impact Aid and the DoDEA Grants program lacks proper accountability, and a follow up to the GAO's 2021 report on DoDEA grants, which showed the potential waste of \$50 million, is in order.¹

¹ Department of Defense Education Activity Grant Oversight (DODIG-2022-001), 5 Oct. 2021, <https://www.dodig.mil/reports.html/Article/2803900/departments-of-defense-education-activity-grant-oversight-dodig-2022-001/>

Military parents with children enrolled at DoDEA schools in the United States report to us that sports offerings, equipment, and facilities at surrounding public schools, which benefit from federal Impact Aid and DoDEA grants, are superior to those found on base. Parents also report that summer school is not offered at base schools, though summer school is a standard offering at most public schools, and U.S. Code authorizes the Director to offer it.² And, concerning, parents report that DoDEA's individual school budgets are not publicly accessible; due to this lack of transparency, parents on School Advisory Committees (DoDEA's version of a school board with no authority) are unable to hold their base schools accountable for ways in which funds are allocated and spent.

School-Based Mental Health

We oppose any measures to expand school-based mental health offerings, given DoDEA administrators' failure to answer questions about official trainings that have encouraged educators to keep social gender transitions secret from parents,³ and we are skeptical of Director Narvaez's plan to add additional mental health professionals to the school level. Such latitude should not be granted until she has given a full accounting of transgender and non-binary policies from the past five years, including her policy collaboration with activist organizations like the Modern Military Association of America⁴ and Parents, Families, and Friends of Lesbians and Gays (PFLAG).⁵

As it stands, a GAO report, *K–12 Education: DOD Needs To Assess Its Capacity To Provide Mental Health Services to Students*, released in May 2025, reveals that counselors with Military and Family Life Counseling (MFLC) are embedded in all DoDEA schools.⁶ These counselors provide confidential, non-medical counseling; they can also be found in Child and Youth Programs on bases and at the National Military Family Association's Operation Purple Up summer camps. Some schools have clinical mental health services provided by the Defense Health Agency, with 25 behavioral health providers offering their services.⁷

Unfortunately, parents have reason to be skeptical of embedded counselors from the MFLC program and school counselors because PFLAG confidently recommends their confidential services to gender-confused children in the event that their parents are not "affirming" of an

²20 USC 921: Defense Dependents' Education System, <https://uscode.house.gov/view.xhtml?hl=false&edition=prelim&req=granuleid%3AUSC-prelim-title20-section921&f=treesort&num=0&saved=%7CKHRpdGxIwIHNIY3Rpb246OTIxIGVkaXRpb246cHJlbGltKSBPUiAoZ3JhbnVsZWlkOjVtQy1wcmVsaW0tdGloYUyMC1zZW50aW9uOTIxKQ%3D%3D%7CdHJlZXNvcnQ%3D%7C%7C0%7Cfalse%7Cprelim>

³ <https://x.com/AmyJHaywood/status/1752676757281353961?s=20> (14 Sept. 2021 letter from former Rep. Vicky Hartzler to Sec.Def. Lloyd Austin)

⁴ <https://x.com/AmyJHaywood/status/1783193658595959246> (screenshot of Modern Military Association of America post: <https://modernmilitary.org/2024/03/lgbtq-military-kids-need-protection-now-more-than-ever/>)

⁵ At Ease: Support for Military Families with LGBTQ+ Children and Teens, PFLAG, 2023, Page 25, <https://pflag.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/04/At-Ease-2023.pdf>

⁶ K–12 Education: DOD Needs To Assess Its Capacity To Provide Mental Health Services to Students, GAO, May 2025, https://files.gao.gov/reports/GAO-25-107247/index.html#_Toc198117724

⁷ Svan, Jennifer, "Army to end contract for longtime mental health program for military kids and families overseas," Stars and Stripes, 3 July 2025, <https://www.stripes.com/theaters/europe/2025-07-03/army-eliminating-mental-health-support-children-18324233.html>

assumed gender identity.⁸ Furthermore, the GAO report found that none of these school-based health programs had been evaluated for efficacy. In other words, no one knows if these mental health services are actually helping or harming children. This is unacceptable.

In fact, one facet of adolescent mental health programs that has not been evaluated is how much they may be contributing to the explosion of gender dysphoria in military kids; HASC Ranking Member Adam Smith claimed in 2024 that between 6,000 to 7,000 military kids were undergoing gender treatments.⁹ The relationship between adolescent health offerings and the increase in transgender and non-binary identities being assumed by military children should be examined before DoDEA is allowed to expand the presence of mental health professionals in its schools.

Additionally, we oppose the expansion and continuation of Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS), one of Director Narvaez's top priorities, until a full accounting has been given to Congress and the Undersecretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness about its purpose, cost, and efficacy. Dr. Carolyn Gorman's research on mental health solutions offered by schools suggests that universal school-based interventions could actually be contributing to worsening mental health among our nation's youth by causing them to ruminate on problems instead of moving past them; and by pathologizing normal childhood stressors and adversity, such interventions could be causing issues among otherwise healthy children. Gorman writes, "These universal programs have forced teachers to serve as pseudo-therapists, and school counselors as pseudo-psychiatrists, attempting to predict and diagnose who might need what level of intervention. These initiatives draw resources away from kids known to be in genuine need."¹⁰

Open the Books did a deep dive into the presence of transformative SEL and MTSS within DoDEA schools in its oversight report, *Schools for Radicals*. Researchers revealed that school staff collect data on students throughout the day, which is then used "to inform DoDEA's program of 'Multi-Tiered System of Support,' ...a major agency activity to support 'equitable learning experiences,' according to the DoDEA's 2023-2024 Blueprint for Continuous Improvement. Data can be used to direct students to mental health interventions that parents may not be aware of."¹¹ The Blueprint for Continuous Improvement is a series of publications that lays out the strategic plan for all of DoDEA schools over a five-year period.

While the May 2025 GAO report accepted the default position at DoDEA that MTSS is a necessary approach, we at Military Families in Support of Parental Rights reject that premise. We further supported the HASC Subcommittee on Military Personnel's attempt in July of 2024 to find out why DoDEA was using MTSS/SEL in its schools. DoD refused to be held

⁸ At Ease: Support for Military Families with LGBTQ+ Children and Teens, PFLAG, 2023, Page 33, <https://pflag.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/04/At-Ease-2023.pdf>

⁹ Shkolnikova, Svetlana, "NDAA proposal to ban treatment for transgender children of troops faces scrutiny," Stars and Stripes, 10 Dec. 2024, <https://www.stripes.com/theaters/us/2024-12-10/ndaa-transgender-military-health-care-16122923.html>

¹⁰ Gorman, Carolyn and Scott Dziengelski, A Better Youth Mental Health Policy, City Journal, 11 July 2024, <https://www.city-journal.org/article/a-better-youth-mental-health-policy>

¹¹ Schools for Radicals: The Secret Push to Institute Radical DEI Curriculums Within the Pentagon's K-12 Public Schools, July 10, 2025, page 9. https://www.openthebooks.com/assets/1/6/DoDEA_Oversight_Report_FINAL.pdf

accountable and ignored a congressional letter signed by the chairman and 17 of his colleagues (which, incidentally, also called for a complete change of DoDEA leadership).¹²

In addition, Dr. Narvaez has shown insubordination and a complete lack of respect for DoD's chain of command by ignoring President Trump's Executive Orders on restoring commonsense discipline policies and removing divisive Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion material from K-12 schools. In fact, a recording of top DoDEA personnel conspiring to rename SEL to "resilience" went viral on Libs of Tik Tok in February¹³ after the *Daily Signal* first broke the news.¹⁴

For the safety of our children, medical care (especially overseas where a "mature minor" doctrine is followed¹⁵)—which includes mental health interventions—and education must remain separate. Secrets must not be kept from parents.

College Admissions Tests

We support the SASC language in Section 555 that requires DoDEA schools to offer and administer a college admissions test of choice to students in their junior year of high school. This includes "any test that the Secretary determines to be appropriate." We are hopeful that this includes the Classic Learning Test, in addition to the ACT and SAT.

Special Education

In regard to special education measures, we applaud the Senate language requiring semi-annual briefings to be given by the DoDEA Director to Congress—and briefings every 180 days, thereafter, until the specified requirements are implemented. Additionally, we are heartened to see requirements for improvement in special education staffing.

Unfortunately, as the 24/25 school year ended, Director Narvaez made the executive decision to eliminate 450 educational technologist positions, speech-language assessors, and special education assessors at the school level as part of her reorganization of DoDEA, which she stated was laid out by the next 5-year Blueprint for Continuous Improvement, the strategic plan for SY25/26 to SY30/31.¹⁶ ¹⁷ This was a blindside for parents and school-level employees.¹⁸ On the

¹² <https://files.constantcontact.com/81b76c35801/0b6deac8-f105-4cdf-ad4b-a5d701963787.pdf?rdr=true>

¹³ <https://x.com/libsoftiktok/status/1892287406503596184>

¹⁴ Mitchell, Elizabeth, "'No Exceptions': Pentagon Schools Defy Hegseth by Renaming DEI Efforts," *Daily Signal*, 11 Feb. 2025, <https://www.dailysignal.com/2025/02/11/no-exceptions-pentagon-schools-defy-hegseth-renaming-dei-effort/>

¹⁵ Defense Health Agency Memorandum, Minors and Reproductive Healthcare (Overseas), March 12, 2023, https://www.med.navy.mil/Portals/62/Documents/NMFA/NMCPHC/root/Health%20Promotion%20and%20Wellness/Women%20Health/Documents/Abortion/DHA_Memo_Minors_and_Reproductive_Health_Care_Services_Overseas.pdf

¹⁶ "OFT Denounces DoDEA cuts to vital school positions," Overseas Federation of Teachers/American Federation of Teachers, 28 May 2025, <https://www.aft.org/press-release/oft-denounces-dodea-cuts-vital-school-positions>

¹⁷ Svan, Jennifer and Brian McElhiney, "DoDEA Announces Expansion of Student Support After Notifying Staff of Job Cuts," *Stars and Stripes*, 30 May 2025, <https://www.stripes.com/theaters/us/2025-05-30/dodea-reorganization-hundreds-being-cut-17958373.html>

¹⁸ McElhiney, Brian, "Open letter warns job cuts at Defense Department schools will harm military children," *Stars and Stripes*, 28 May 2025, https://www.stripes.com/theaters/asia_pacific/2025-05-28/dodea-staffing-cuts-open-letter-17933956.html

heels of a GAO report that exposed severe shortcomings in special education at DoDEA,¹⁹ it was surprising to see the elimination of positions like speech-language assessors and special education assessors. Unfortunately, parents were not part of the Blueprint Steering Committee, and FOIA requests for more information about who was commissioned to create the latest Blueprint for Continuous Improvement and who sits on the Blueprint Steering Committee have resulted in stonewalling and completely redacted documents.²⁰ The SASC provision to require improved special education staffing is a much-needed course correction.

In closing, we would like to thank the staffers and members of the SASC and HASC subcommittees on personnel for their hard work on policies to increase the quality of life for servicemembers and their families. We stand ready to answer questions and give feedback should another roundtable be held to solicit input from military families. Please reach out to Amy Haywood at [REDACTED]

Respectfully,

Amy Haywood
Founder
Military Families in Support of Parental Rights

¹⁹ “Special Education: Improved Allocation of Resources Could Help DOD Education Activity Better Meet Students’ Needs,” *GAO*, April 2025 <https://files.gao.gov/reports/GAO-25-107053/index.html>. Accessed 26 July 2025.

²⁰ <https://x.com/AmyJHaywood/status/1936812415468949788>