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OFFICE OF THE ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF DEFENSE
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WASHINGTON, D.C. 20301-1500

February 4, 2025

Kansas Committee on Education
Chairwoman Susan Estes
State Capitol, Room 218-N
300 SW 10th Ave
Topeka, KS 66612

Name: Michelle Richart
Organization: United States Department of Defense
Contact: Michelle.richart.civ@mail.mil; 702-623-1893
Position: Proponent, HB 2102
Type: Virtual

RE: HB 2102, Advance Enrollment for Military Students

Dear Chairwoman Estes and Members of the Committee:

On behalf of military families and the Department of Defense, I am writing to express support for the policy changes proposed in HB2102, a bill that addresses advance enrollment for military families.

My name is Michelle Richart and I am the Midwest Regional Liaison for the Defense-State Liaison Office, operating under the direction of Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness, and the Deputy Assistant Secretary for Military Community and Family Policy. Our mission is to be a resource to state policymakers as they work to address quality of life issues of military families. We hope that Kansas will join the more than 40 states which have already enacted similar advance enrollment policies.

Approximately 185,000 U.S. military children move between schools annually. Military service members are routinely reassigned to new duty stations in the summer, due to mission and training requirements. As a result of these summer moves, they may potentially miss their child's school registration and other important application dates that occur in the spring. Long-term negative impacts include having to shift their planned courses of study, which may require them to take courses in summer school, or even force them to graduate later than their peers.

Service members typically receive official military orders detailing their upcoming assignment 30 days to 6 months prior to their move. Allowing military families to enroll their children, including children eligible to receive special education services, register for classes,

and apply for specialized programs at the same time as their peers, prior to physically arriving to their location, will help to facilitate their uninterrupted educational progress and smooth integration into their new communities, and relieve unneeded stress during their transition between locations.

With 15,164 active duty military children in this state, Kansas is in a unique position to have a positive effect on the educational experiences of military children and families. While Guard and Reserve service members do not typically move as often, this policy will also positively impact these families when they do. The intent of this policy is not to offer an advantage or priority over other students, but simply to provide military families access to educational programs and courses at the same time as their in-state peers. No new online systems are required and there is added benefit to school districts by reducing the discrepancy between projected and actual student enrollment numbers for staffing purposes.

Important and related to this policy, studies have shown that military families and schools alike regularly do not assume that advance enrollment includes those with special education needs. A Partners in Promise study found that only 16% of respondents with special education needs have ever been able to advance enroll their student, despite their state having advance enrollment policies. Of those who have never used advance enrollment, 78% were told because it was “not an option”. ***As such we would like to suggest an amendment to the current bill, which will not change the policy, but clarify that students with special education needs are included.*** In fact, if a school is able to get a student’s special education plan prior to arrival then they will be better situated to provide immediate comparable services.

Proposed Amendment:

Such advance enrollment policies related to a child of a military family member shall also apply if the enrolling student is transferring with a Section 504 plan, an individualized family service plan, or an individualized education plan. When applicable, the school district shall take the necessary steps to ensure that comparable services are in place when the child arrives in the state.

In closing, we are grateful for the tremendous efforts that Kansas has historically made to support our military members and their families. We appreciate the opportunity to support the policy reflected in HB2102. Thank you for taking the time to consider this issue. Please feel free to contact me with any questions you might have.

Sincerely,



Michelle Richart
Midwest Region Liaison
Department of Defense – State Liaison Office