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July 13, 2023

U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Representative:

On behalf of the members of the National Education Association—who include educators at Department of Defense Education Activity (DoDEA) schools—we urge you to oppose amendment #1386 to the National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA), which would restrict DoDEA schools’ library offerings. Votes associated with this legislation may be included in the NEA Report Card for the 118th Congress.

While the NDAA includes a much-needed 4.6-percent pay raise for service members and the Department of Defense civilian workforce, including DoDEA educators, we are extremely troubled by the consideration of amendment #1386, which would mandate what resources libraries can provide.

DoDEA educators strive to establish and maintain an open dialogue with parents, and together, they determine how best to instill curiosity and the desire to learn in every child. Amendment #1386 infringes on this dialogue by ignoring educators’ experience and expertise, in an attempt to score political points rather than meet students’ educational needs.

We are also disappointed that the bill contains a parents’ bill of rights provision. Parents and educators communicate on matters related to curricula, learning resources, and other issues through school advisory committees, school boards, and installation advisory committees. The School Liaison Officer program, a link between schools, parents, and command, is another conduit for communication. A parents’ bill of rights would not enhance this; instead, it would sow distrust and antagonism—and students would be caught in the middle.

DoDEA is a stellar school system in which educators understand the unique challenges that military-connected families face due to deployments and relocations. Despite these challenges, DoDEA students consistently rank at or near the top on the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), the nation’s report card. This is a tribute to the collaboration that exists between parents and educators.

We not only urge you to vote NO on amendment #1386; we urge you to oppose any amendments that would duplicate existing disclosure requirements for DoDEA schools, as well as those that would stigmatize or ostracize LGBTQ+ students and educators. Instead, we ask that you focus on measures that would enhance the quality of education that military-connected students receive, including measures to ensure students have the individualized support they need, address educator shortages, and improve school infrastructure. This is how we can offer all students the resources, one-on-one attention, and well-rounded curricula they deserve.

Sincerely,

Marc Egan
Director of Government Relations
National Education Association