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June 12, 2024

U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Representative:

On behalf of the 3 million members of the National Education Association and the 50 million students they teach and support, including those attending schools on military bases throughout the world, we offer these comments for your consideration as you vote today on amendments to the National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA).

The Federal Education Association (FEA) is an NEA affiliate whose members serve 66,000 students in schools administered by the Department of Defense Education Activity (DoDEA). They are the children of active duty military and civilian employees of the Department of Defense, both stateside and abroad. We are pleased that H.R. 8070, the Servicemember Quality of Life Improvement Act and National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA), reflects some of our priorities for these students, educators, and schools, including:

- Extending the current maximum student-to-teacher ratios until 2030, which will continue individualized teaching and support for students;
- Requiring the Secretary of Defense to research and report on the effectiveness of efforts to reduce standardized testing redundancies in DoDEA;
- Requiring DoDEA to enter into a data-sharing agreement to streamline the process for military service members and DoD civilian employees, including DoDEA educators, to receive Public Service Loan Forgiveness;
- Directing DoDEA to reestablish a transfer program for overseas educators; and
- Requiring the Director of DoDEA to brief the House Armed Services Committee on the barriers for education support professionals (ESPs) to transition to certified educator positions in DoDEA.

However, we urge you to vote NO on the following amendments. Votes on them may be included in the NEA Report Card for the 118th Congress.

- **Amendment #41**, making the hiring freeze for diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) positions in the Department of Defense permanent, and **Amendment #43**, eliminating the position of Chief Diversity Officer of the Department of Defense and prohibiting the establishment of any substantially similar position.

***NEA's position:***

-Both amendments are attempts to roll back civil rights protections. They would harm the cohesiveness of America's military and ignore America's demographic shifts.

-More than 40% of service members identify as minorities; according to [Blue Star Families](#), by 2027, most adults eligible for military service will be people of color. These families make decisions about military life based on perceptions of racism and based on their confidence in having mechanisms available for addressing their concerns.

-Anti-DEI measures do not inspire confidence among military members or their families. They are attempts to use race and ethnicity to stoke disruption and distrust and to divide communities.

- **Amendment #46**, encouraging book banning and stoking hostility toward LGBTQ+ educators and students.

***NEA's position:***

-The amendment continues the ruthless attack that some politicians are waging against LGBTQ+ students and educators.

-It is dangerously vague, could lead to confusion and misinterpretation, and would get in the way of the healthy communication channels that already exist between educators and parents. Furthermore, it is an attempt to spawn fear in and control educators, spurring them to second-guess and censor themselves.

-As trusted professionals, educators are best equipped to make classroom decisions that ensure student success. In DoDEA schools, educators and parents work together to determine what is best for students.

- **Amendment #62**, requiring DoDEA schools to notify parents if students are not reading at grade-level by the end of third grade.

***NEA's position:***

-DoDEA fourth graders significantly outperformed the national average on the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) in 2022. Only 20% of DoDEA students were below the basic achievement level, as opposed to 39% of students nationwide.

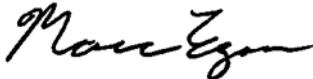
-This level of achievement comes despite the transient nature of DoDEA students, most of whom spend a maximum of three years at any one DoDEA school due to their parents' deployments. In fact, many students may not even remain in a DoDEA school for an entire academic year. Educators are constantly challenged to provide an extra level of support to bring students up to DoDEA standards.

-As stated above, parents and DoDEA educators already partner regarding what is best for students; Amendment #62 represents unnecessary congressional involvement that dismisses existing communication channels.

We urge you to vote NO on these amendments because they will undermine DoDEA educators' ability to nurture and support students.

Additionally, while we support many measures within H.R. 8070, we would be remiss not to mention our disappointment that this legislation would create a voucher-like scheme in DoDEA Bahrain. The proposed allowance for schooling military dependents in Bahrain would rob DoDEA of resources and open the door to stripping students of First Amendment, due process, and other constitutional and statutory rights. School vouchers also lack academic and fiscal accountability, which makes fraud and abuse more likely—especially in cases like this, where funds would be going to schools or institutions outside the purview of the United States. We strongly oppose this language and ask that this provision not be included in the final bill when it goes through conference.

Sincerely,



Marc Egan  
Director of Government Relations  
National Education Association