



# MILITARY CHILD EDUCATION COALITION

108 East FM 2410, Suite D • Harker Heights, TX 76548 • (254) 953-1923

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Texas State Senate  
Committee on Education  
Texas State Capitol  
Austin, Texas 78701

Chairman Shapiro and Members of the Committee:

On behalf of America's military children, allow me to first thank you for your service and to thank you for your interest in the issues affecting Texas' military families. Texas can be proud of the tremendous military presence in our state and the significant impact that this presence creates in our state's economy. This presence is no coincidence and is due in large part to the supportive environment fostered by our state and local governments.

I represent the Military Child Education Coalition (MCEC), a non-profit group working to solve the challenges facing military children. The mission of MCEC is to serve as advocates for children whose parents are serving our nation. Our purpose is to develop systems and processes to resolve transition issues for military students.

Allow me to also express my thanks for the many great things that have been accomplished with your help. Thanks to visionary legislation passed by this body, military children now enjoy in-state tuition status when they attend our state's colleges and universities. We commend the work of the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board to spread the word about this opportunity through their web site and through their communications with university admissions staffs. It looks like we are on track on the tuition issue.

More good news – exciting things taking place to benefit military kids in Texas. We are working with the state, through the Texans Caring for Military Children Initiative, to train K-12 school counselors statewide in strategies for supporting military-connected students of the Active Duty, National Guard, and the Reserves. We applaud Texas Education Commissioner Shirley Neeley and her staff for their leadership and support in this important effort.

Today, I am writing to ask that you continue your support of military children in our state by passing critical legislation to assist them in their academic transitions. Senate Bill 117, which is before you, will help students to relocate and begin their academic work more quickly and more efficiently. It requires the rapid and timely transfer of academic records by school districts.

As we all know, military service requires sacrifices that the brave men and women of our armed forces volunteer to make. Their service also impacts their families, including their children. Today, in response to the global war on terror, our military is being called upon to play a greater role than ever before and this increased operational tempo places an even greater strain on military families and military children.

While the primary beneficiary of this legislation is the more than 65,000 children of our active duty military stationed in Texas, it also benefits all students who change school districts and are in a time of transition. MCEC believes that the children of the active duty and Reserve components, and all Texas children, are entitled to a quality education and any steps that the state can take to facilitate their transition into our state's schools will benefit both the students and their school districts.

Many times, delays in records transfer and transcript analysis cause students to miss academic opportunities or deny them access to needed programs. Speeding up the transfer of records will help to ensure that these opportunities are not lost and that our state's mobile children, particularly military children, have the opportunity to participate in academic programs that benefit them.

What we are seeking through Senate Bill 117, is as simple as the Golden Rule. Nothing is more frustrating to school districts than waiting to receive records on new students. Through this bill, we compel districts to do unto other districts as they would like to have done unto them. Let's get the records moving so that we can get the kids enrolled in the classes they need in order to get the educations that they need.

We salute your commitment to our nation's mobile students – most especially the children of our military families – and your dedication to improving their lives.

Thank you for your consideration.

Respectfully Submitted,



Mary Keller, Ed.D.

Executive Director

Military Child Education Coalition

## **Basic Facts About Military-Connected Students...**

- There are just over **1.2 million** children of members of the Active Duty military. National Guard and Reserves troops have an additional 650,000 children. This totals **1.85 million children** who have one or both parents serving in the United States Military.
- Many parents serve in the military. Parents comprise 58% of the Active Duty force and 32% of the Guard and Reserves force.
- Some military children have two parents (57,000 military parents) who serve in the military. 84% of these families, known as dual-military families, serve in the enlisted troops.
- 6.4% of military children have single parents, compared to the U.S. average of 8.4% of children.
- The vast majority of military students attend U.S. public schools. About 15% of military students are in Department of Defense schools (most of which are overseas), another 15% are in private, parochial, or host nation schools, and 6-9% of students are homeschooled.
- Most military children are very young. For active duty families, 75% of children are younger than 12 and 50% are younger than 7. For Guard and Reserves families, who tend to be older than Active Duty troops, 53% are younger than 12.
- Approximately 13% of military students are special needs student, compared with 11.5% of U.S. students. The special education rate in states currently varies from 9% to 16%.
- Military children move an average of every 2-3 years. This translates into 6-9 different schools in different school systems and is in addition to the regular school transitions from elementary to middle school and middle to high school. Most teenaged students will attend at least 2 high schools prior to graduation.
- About 50% of those who choose a military career come from military families.
- Over 80% of military children are living in just 10 states.