



National Association of Federally Impacted Schools

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March 18, 2019

Dear Member of Congress,

The National Association of Federally Impacted Schools opposes S.695/H.R. 1605 – the *Education Savings Accounts for Military Families Act of 2019*. These bills create a new voucher program within the Impact Aid program, give the Secretary of Education authority to transfer funds from other Department of Education programs to fund the vouchers, and creates a new Federal online marketplace with little oversight or accountability.

Supporting military families and the unique needs of military-connected students is a top priority for public school districts. Impact Aid is a partnership between communities and the Federal government where there is non-taxable property, such as military installations, Indian lands, low-rent housing, and national parks and laboratories, reimbursing school districts for lost local tax revenue caused by the presence of the Federal government. Federally impacted school districts that educate military connected students rely on Impact Aid to implement educational programming and provide supports for these students and their families.

S. 695 & H.R. 1605 would create Education Savings Accounts (ESAs), a form of a voucher, for military connected students in the Impact Aid program, by amending Title VII – Impact Aid of *the Every Student Succeeds Act* and inserting an authorization of \$1.2 billion as a new line item in Impact Aid. The legislation also gives the Secretary of Education unprecedented authority to use his or her discretion to transfer funds from any Department of Education program to fund the vouchers. The Secretary could choose to re-direct Impact Aid funding to this voucher program. This provision would create instability in the Military Education Savings Account program as well as Impact Aid and every other Department of Education program.

In addition, the *Education Savings Accounts for Military Families Act* creates a new federally run bureaucratic online education marketplace with little oversight or accountability. The legislation would permit private entities to receive public taxpayer dollars with no consideration for the quality of services and the Federal government and States would be expressly prohibited from exercising control or supervision over education service providers supported by the voucher. Further, families would forfeit the protections provided under the Military Interstate Compact.

Congress recognized in 1950 that the Federal government had an obligation to help meet the local responsibility of financing public education in areas impacted by a Federal presence. That same recognition holds true today. Instead of creating a voucher for military connected students, Congress should fully fund Impact Aid, which is currently funded at less than 60 percent of the need formula established by law.

Sincerely,

Hilary Goldmann
Executive Director

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Director of Policy & Advocacy