

July 13, 2026

The Honorable Mike Johnson
Speaker of the House
U.S. House of Representatives

The Honorable Hakeem Jeffries
Minority Leader
U.S. House of Representatives

The Honorable Mike Rogers
Chairman
House Committee on Armed Services
U.S. House of Representatives

The Honorable Adam Smith
Ranking Member
House Committee on Armed Services
U.S. House of Representatives

Dear Speaker Johnson, Minority Leader Jeffries, Chairman Rogers and Ranking Member Smith:

On behalf of the 38 undersigned national organizations comprising the National Coalition for Public Education and its allies, we write to express our opposition to the inclusion of any provision or amendment in H.R. 8800, the Fiscal Year 2027 National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA), that would create a private school voucher program for military-connected students or their families. Private school vouchers undermine the public education systems that serve the overwhelming majority of military-connected children. As such, [the controversial and damaging voucher amendment](#) proposed by Representatives Addison McDowell and Claudia Tenney (amendment 26 in [the rule, McDowell/Tenney, #905](#)) should be removed from consideration as an addition to the NDAA or be rejected if it is brought for a vote.

The proposed voucher amendment is particularly troubling because it authorizes a new federal program without specifying either a funding level or the number of students who would be eligible to participate. Is the Department of Defense best positioned to determine which of the approximately 480,000 active-duty military-connected children between the ages of 6 and 18 should receive a federally subsidized private school education? Is Congress prepared to write a blank check for an education pilot program with no meaningful guardrails, no cost estimate, and no clear understanding of its long-term fiscal impact? Creating a new uncapped voucher program represents a fiscally irresponsible use of taxpayer dollars, potentially exposing federal taxpayers to billions in new obligations while providing no assurance that the investment will improve educational outcomes for military-connected students.

Vouchers Undermine Support for Military-Connected Students in Public Schools

Education is a critical quality-of-life issue for military families and plays an important role in maintaining an effective all-volunteer force. Private school vouchers would undermine many of the critical supports that school districts, states, and federal agencies have established to meet the unique needs of military-connected students.

Voucher programs divert scarce public resources away from public schools to subsidize private education for a limited number of students. Specifically, this amendment would redirect funding away from Department of Defense Education Activity (DoDEA) schools and public school districts that serve the vast majority of military-connected students and instead funnel federal dollars to private,

largely unaccountable education providers. Such a shift would weaken the very public education systems that the majority of active-duty military families depend on.

Military-connected students often face unique challenges stemming from frequent relocations, school transitions, and parental deployments. Public schools and DoDEA schools have developed comprehensive supports to help students navigate these challenges, including coordinated academic transfer agreements across states, specialized counseling services, and professional development for educators and school counselors. Redirecting resources away from these schools through a private school voucher program would make it more difficult for them to continue providing the services that military-connected students and families rely upon.

In addition, a voucher program could ultimately threaten funding for Impact Aid, which helps school districts educate students who live on federal property or have military-connected parents. School districts near military installations often rely heavily on Impact Aid because federal property cannot be taxed to generate local school revenue. Any direct or indirect erosion of Impact Aid funding would place additional financial pressure on these communities and reduce resources available to the public schools serving military-connected students.

Subsidizing Private School Education Will Not Help Military Families

Although promoted as a form of "school choice," private school vouchers do not guarantee meaningful educational options for military-connected families. In practice, the choice rests largely with private schools, which can determine whom they admit and retain. Many private schools reserve the right to deny admission based on factors such as disability status, religion, academic performance, sexual orientation, gender identity, or other student characteristics.

Students with disabilities are particularly underserved by voucher programs. Private schools are generally not required to provide the same level of services and protections available under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), including the supports outlined in a student's individualized education program (IEP). Some private schools lack special education programs altogether, while others may deny admission to students with disabilities or impose disciplinary measures that would not be permissible in public schools. Taxpayer dollars should not be used to subsidize educational environments that are permitted to discriminate against students or deny them services guaranteed under federal law.

Military-connected families would also lose access to important protections afforded by the Military Interstate Children's Compact Commission (MIC3) and the Interstate Compact on Educational Opportunity for Military Children. The Compact addresses many of the educational transition issues caused by frequent military moves, including timely enrollment, appropriate grade-level placement, transfer of records, course and graduation requirements, extracurricular eligibility, attendance flexibility related to deployment, and support during transitions between school systems.

Adopted by all 50 states and the District of Columbia, the Compact provides an essential and consistent framework for public schools. However, it does not extend to private schools participating in voucher programs. As a result, military families who use a voucher could find that their child is no longer assured the transition protections available in public schools under the Compact. A student transferring during a permanent change of station, for example, could face delays in enrollment,

difficulty receiving appropriate course placement or credit transfer, or barriers to participating in extracurricular activities and meeting graduation requirements.

A federal voucher program should not place military-connected students in a position where they must choose between a subsidized private-school option and the educational continuity protections established specifically to support mobile military families. Any proposal affecting military-connected students should strengthen—not weaken—the nationwide systems designed to ensure they can transition successfully from one school and community to another.

Pilot Programs Are Not a Harmless First Step

Despite the lack of detail regarding eligibility, funding levels, or program design, proponents may characterize this proposal as a limited or pilot initiative. However, even a small private school voucher program has the potential to pave the way for significant future expansions that could undermine DoDEA schools and public school districts that depend on Impact Aid and other federal support.

History demonstrates that voucher advocates frequently begin with narrow, targeted programs and then seek to expand them over time, even when the results fail to meet proponents' promises. The Washington, D.C., voucher program provides one such example. What begins as a small pilot can quickly evolve into a much broader diversion of public education funding, with lasting consequences for the schools serving the vast majority of students.

For these reasons, and many others, NCPE strongly opposes any provision in the NDAA that would create a private school voucher program for military-connected children. For more information about the impact of private school vouchers, please visit our website or contact NCPE co-chairs Sasha Pudelski (spudelski@aasa.org) or Nicole Fuller (nfuller@ncld.org).

Sincerely,

AASA, The School Superintendents Association
Alliance to Reclaim Our Schools
American Atheists
American Civil Liberties Union
American Humanist Association
Americans United for Separation of Church and State
Association of School Business Officials International (ASBO)
Baptist Joint Committee for Religious Liberty
Center for Inquiry (CFI)
Clearinghouse on Women's Issues
Council for Exceptional Children
Council of Administrators of Special Education
Council of the Great City Schools
EdTrust
Families for Strong Public Schools
Federal Lands Impacted Schools Association
Feminist Majority

FFRF Action Fund
Florida Policy Institute
In the Public Interest
Learning Opportunity Impacted Schools Association, LO~ISA
Military Impacted Schools Association
National Association of Elementary School Principals
National Center for Learning Disabilities
National Council of Jewish Women
National Education Association
National Indian Impacted Schools Association (NIISA)
National Principals Association
National PTA
National Rural Education Association
National School Boards Association
Parents for Public Schools
Partnership for Equity & Education Rights (PEER)
People For the American Way
Public Funds Public Schools
School Social Workers Association of America
The National Association of Federally Impacted Schools (NAFIS)
The Secular Coalition for America