

The Honorable Jack Reed
728 Hart Senate Office Bldg
U.S. Senate
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Adam Smith
2264 Rayburn House Office Bldg
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable James M. Inhofe
205 Russell Senate Office Bldg
U.S. Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Mike Rogers
2469 Rayburn House Office Bldg
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20510



Dear Chairman Reed, Ranking Member Inhofe, Chairman Smith, and Ranking Member Rogers,

We, the undersigned veteran and military service organizations representing service members, veterans, retirees, their families and survivors, thank you for your continued efforts to improve the Exceptional Family Member Program (EFMP), a vital program that supports over 130,000 EFMP family members across all service branches. We appreciate your commitment in strengthening the program by including provisions in the 2021 NDAA to standardize the program throughout the military, as well as provide much needed access to respite care services and special education resources.

But there is still a lot of work to be done. We know that many military families struggle with frequent transitions associated with service to our nation. Military children transition alongside their parents, and experience education gaps while dealing with parents' deployments. In the general education classroom, these "normal" military educational challenges are addressed with increased parent and teacher sensitivity training and customized resources. However, the additional issues faced by special needs families are not as straightforward.

Military children enrolled in the EFMP Program often have Individualized Education Programs (IEPs), providing an additional layer of challenges for those needing to access special education in accordance with the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). Those unique challenges were highlighted a year ago during military spouse testimonies at the EFMP Hearing before the House Armed Services Committee Military Personnel Subcommittee.

Attached is a summary of recent survey findings and the impact frequent military moves have on military students in special education. We learned that moves leave over 79 percent without special education services for over a month. In shortening the gaps in education delivery, we can help military students have the same access to a free and appropriate public education (FAPE) as their civilian counterparts.

We believe removing education hurdles that are unique to our military children with special needs will positively impact mission readiness, troop retention, and future recruitment. Those who fight for our country should not also have to fight for something as elementary as their children's education. We appreciate your continued commitment to those who serve our nation and our military families.

Sincerely,

[The Undersigned Organizations]

Partners in PROMISE,

Blue Star Families, Military Child Education Coalition, Modern Military Association of America, PsychHub