



March 19, 2018

Support the Education Savings Accounts for Military Families Act, H.R. 5199

On behalf of our activist community, I urge you to contact your representative and ask him or her to support the Education Savings Accounts for Military Families Act, H.R. 5199, introduced by Rep. Jim Banks (R-Ind.). The bill would give military families the option of opening an education savings account (ESA) for military-dependent students, advancing school choice and ensuring that poor educational options are not a deterrent for service members either prior to joining or upon being given a new posting.

As Congress is tasked in the Constitution with raising and supporting the army, providing and maintaining a navy, along with other necessities for our military capabilities, it must also ensure the readiness of these forces in order to properly provide for the common defense. A crucial part of this is recruiting and retaining talent in the armed forces. As Rep. Banks said, “The men and women who serve our country in uniform make sacrifices daily, but the education of their children should not be one of them.”

In this vein, Congress has already implemented a program intended to aid education of military-dependent students -- the federal Impact Aid program -- that in part “provides financial assistance to local educational agencies that...educate children of parents who are in the military services.” This is the largest federal program providing funding for children in military families, however, it fails to yield its intended results.

In fact, according to a study from Military Times of U.S. service members, 40 percent of respondents said that they have either declined or would decline a career-advancing job at a different installation to remain at their current military facility because of high-performing surrounding schools, and 35 percent said that dissatisfaction with a child’s education was or is a “significant factor” in deciding whether or not to continue military service entirely.

The Education Savings Accounts for Military Families Act would quite simply take this portion

of funds in the Impact Aid program and transition them into an optional ESA that allows military families the school choice they deserve to pay for any education-related service, product, or provider that meets the unique needs of their student.

Military families are overwhelmingly supportive of ESAs, and according to a 2017 study by EdChoice, are five times more likely to support than they are to oppose the option of education savings accounts. Additionally, only one in three respondents of this survey are even aware of the current Impact Aid program that is supposed to benefit them. Combining these known perceptions, it is clear that the best path forward is taking the currently ineffectively-used funds of the Impact Aid program and directing them towards creating education savings accounts for military families that they will use and appreciate.

As Rep. Banks said, “[His] legislation will help improve military readiness by boosting recruitment and retention of our nation’s best and brightest. Expanding educational opportunities for military-dependent children will give parents who serve the peace of mind to focus on their missions. Portability is key for students who are often required to move because of a change in a parent’s military assignment. The flexibility in this legislation will allow military families the freedom to tailor their children’s education to best fit individual needs and maximize academic achievement.”

School choice is over and over proven to be the best educational option for families in all walks of life, allowing them to tailor education to fit their child’s specific needs. Military families are certainly no exception, and Congress has the responsibility and ability to address this. For these reasons, I urge you to contact your representative and ask him or her to support the Education Savings Accounts for Military Families Act, H.R. 5199.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Adam Brandon', with a stylized, flowing script.

Adam Brandon
President, FreedomWorks