

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

March 27, 2015

The Honorable Thad Cochran
Chairman, Defense Subcommittee
Committee on Appropriations
115 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Richard Durbin
Vice Chairman, Defense Subcommittee
Committee on Appropriations
119 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Chairman Cochran and Vice Chairman Durbin:

We write to request continued support for Impact Aid funding in the Fiscal Year 2016 Defense Appropriations bill for school districts with high concentrations of military students and school districts that enroll children of military families with severe disabilities. Specifically, we ask that you continue to strongly support Impact Aid for heavily impacted school districts and that you include \$5 million to fund the Impact Aid provision contained in Section 363 of the Fiscal Year 2001 Defense Department Authorization Act to relieve the considerable financial strain on school districts educating large numbers of military children with severe disabilities.

Providing a high quality education for the children of our men and women in uniform is a military readiness issue. Our service members rely on local school districts to provide a supportive, safe, and secure learning environment for their children. Today, there are over one million children of active duty service members, and half of them attend schools in heavily impacted school districts. We need to ensure that these school districts have the resources they need to adequately support these children.

Some school districts with a large military presence may have higher percentages of students with disabilities than districts with non-federally connected students – in part because military personnel who have children with disabilities often receive compassionate post assignments to these districts, many of which have strong special education programs. The cost of providing special education services is high: services to meet the needs of these children can cost upwards of \$100,000 a year (as compared to the average national per pupil expenditure of \$11,153 according to the most recent data from the National Center for Education Statistics). These school districts, which are providing specialized programs mostly at local expense, need our support as they strive to educate these children.

Congressional commitment to military children is now more important than ever, as they struggle with their parents' long deployments in active combat and counterterrorism activities. Our military families give so much as they proudly defend our nation. We must do everything we can to assure them that their children are provided the best possible education programs.

Thank you for your continued support and dedication to our men and women in uniform and their families, and for your thoughtful consideration of this request.

Sincerely,

Jack Reed

James M. Clapper

Frank

Brian Schatz

Kirsten Gillibrand

M. Michael Gandy

Ron Wyden

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