



February 7, 2024

U.S. Senate Committee on Armed Services
U.S. House Committee on Armed Services
Washington, DC

Dear Senator/Representative:

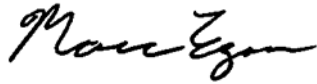
The Federal Education Association, an affiliate of the National Education Association, represents educators serving 66,000 students in 160 schools administered by the Department of Defense Education Authority (DoDEA)—the children of active duty military and civilian employees of the Department of Defense. On behalf of those students and the educators who serve them, we would like to convey these priorities for the FY2025 National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA):

- **Adopt the bipartisan, bicameral Success for Military Connected Students Act ([S. 2755/H.R. 6287](#)).** Introduced by Sens. Tim Kaine (D-VA) and Thom Tillis (R-NC) and Reps. Don Bacon (R-NE) and Jeff Jackson (D-NC), this bill would extend until 2030 DoDEA's current student-to-teacher ratio. The current ratios—18:1 for grades K-3 and approximately 24:1 for grades 3-12—were set by the FY2021 NDAA.
- **Direct DoDEA to increase school-level mental health specialist positions.** The COVID-19 pandemic intensified the need for mental healthcare that was already in short supply. According to the [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention \(CDC\)](#), 44 percent of U.S. students report feeling persistently sad or hopeless, 22 percent report seriously considering suicide, and 10 percent report attempting suicide. School-based services can enhance access and facilitate early identification and treatment of mental health issues, while also creating a welcoming, safe, and supportive learning space for students.
- **Direct DoDEA to administer fewer standardized tests.** A recent [U.S. Government Accountability Office \(GAO\) study](#) found that K-12 students in DoDEA schools spend more time on standardized tests than their counterparts in nearby school districts—24 school days vs. 16 school days. Many of these tests are not required by DoDEA, but added by DoDEA districts themselves. Students aren't standardized. There are better, more equitable ways to assess their learning, knowledge, and skills than standardized tests—and DoDEA schools should use them.

In addition, we look forward to working with Congress to ensure access to adequate healthcare for FEA families stationed in Japan and the Pacific. A provision of the FY2024 NDAA (Sec. 726) directed GAO to conduct a study of this issue, which should be completed soon.

We thank you for the opportunity to share our goals for the next NDAA and stand ready to work with you to realize them.

Sincerely,



Marc Egan
Director of Government Relations
National Education Association



Richard Tarr
Executive Director/General Counsel
Federal Education Association