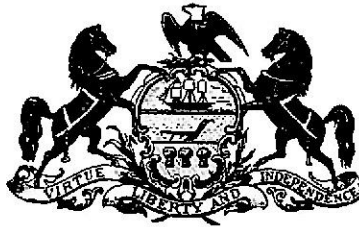


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Interstate Compact on Educational Opportunity for Military Children

HB 2518 and HB 2566

Chairmen and members of the committee, thank you for giving me this opportunity to offer a few remarks about House Bill 2518, the "Interstate Compact on Educational Opportunity for Military Children." Before I begin, I would like to thank and commend Rep. Mark Cohen for also introducing this compact and I look forward to working with him and others on this important matter.

This compact addresses a critical issue concerning education and military dependents who may transfer from one school district in one state to another school district in another state. House Bill 2518 would establish a compact that would usher forth - uniformity in education for our military dependents across this country.

Specifically, the compact provides a comprehensive policy approach and mechanism to address the major areas of education that are affected during deployments , such as, the transferring of education records, course sequencing, graduation requirements, extra-curricular activities, testing, enrollment and power of custodial parents and guardianships. House Bill 2518 will assist in addressing a long set of problems that have plagued military members and their families.

The Interstate Education Compact has been worked on and vetted for some time and the obstacles faced by our military families have been in place for decades. This issue is not some knee-jerk reaction to some anecdotal story that was read in a local newspaper.

The Interstate Compact was developed and drafted by the Council of State Governments in cooperation with the U.S. Department of Defense Office of Personnel and Readiness. This proposal has built-in enforcement and compliance mechanisms that are part of a detailed governance structure.

Let me be clear, we must do what we can to minimize discrimination against or the obstacles presented to military children and their families, whether they transfer into Pennsylvania or transfer out of Pennsylvania or within a state due to deployment orders.

Although Pennsylvania will become part of this compact should House Bill 2518 be enacted, the policies of each school district in every other state that becomes part of the Compact will affect children who have attended school in this Commonwealth. Furthermore, with the changeovers which are currently taking place at a facility in my district known as the Willow Grove Joint Interagency Installation, this issue will become ever more present for military families in and around Willow Grove now and into the future as this facility becomes utilized according to plans. These plans include establishing Willow Grove as a National Defense Operations area, Homeland Security Hub, and emergency preparedness staging center with operational logistics that include the entire Northeast Corridor.

Finally, the Interstate Education Compact represents a systematic national, district-to-district best practice model that will both assist school districts across this country and help facilitate a more straightforward and streamlined process for the educational transfers of our military members and their families.

I thank the committee chairmen and members for their time and Rep. Mark Cohen for facilitating the discussion of this issue and will be happy to answer any questions the committee members may have.