



MILITARY CHILD EDUCATION COALITION

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...for the sake of the child

March 16, 2009

Senator Florence Shapiro
Chair, Senate Education Committee
Texas Senate
Capitol P.O. Box 12068 Capitol Station
Austin, Texas 78711

RE: Senate Bill 3

Dear Senator Shapiro:

The Military Child Education Coalition applauds your efforts in Senate Bill 3 to strengthen the public school curriculum, accountability, and graduation requirements. As in your efforts throughout your many years as Senate Education Committee Chair, this bill demonstrates strong commitment to educational excellence and equity.

As the Senate Education Committee considers SB 3, the Military Child Education Coalition (MCEC) asks you to consider the educational needs of military children who will be transitioning into Texas public schools from other states, and those who will be moving from Texas to public schools in other states. Differences in state high school policies, particularly those that pertain to course, assessment and graduation requirements, can make a military child's path to college and workforce readiness difficult.

Today, almost two million children have parents who serve in the military. Texas has the largest percentage of military children with 99,663 children of Active Duty, National Guard, and Reserve Service Members. On average, these children will move six to nine times over the course of their K-12 experience. These frequent transitions, punctuated by the stress of separations from a deployed parent, translate into a confusing range of opportunities and complex challenges. During these times of increased deployments and extended family separations, military children are especially affected by the complexities of school transitions.

To ease transitions for highly mobile military children, it is our sincere hope that the Senate Education Committee and Texas Legislature will develop state policy that:

- *Establishes a College and Career Ready Diploma for All Students.* Today 20 states require all students to earn a College and Career Ready Diploma – Fourteen states require students to automatically enroll in the default college and career ready curriculum but allow students to opt out, while six states mandate the college and career ready curriculum without an opt out [Closing the Expectations Gap, Achieve, 2009].

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- *Requires All Students to Complete a College-Prep Curriculum.* Today 19 states require or are in the process of implementing a requirement for all students to complete a college-prep curriculum [Quality Counts, Education Week, 2009].
- *Requires All High School Students to Complete 4 Years of Mathematics.* Today 14 states require all students to complete 4 years of math to earn a College and Career Ready Diploma, and two states require 4 years of math for a General Diploma [Closing the Expectations Gap, Achieve 2009].
- *Develops a College and Career Ready Assessment System.* Today 33 states have or are in the process of implementing college and career ready assessments for all students [Closing the Expectations Gap, Achieve, 2009].

Our recommendations reflect goals of the Interstate Compact on Educational Opportunity for Military Children, an inter-state agreement that is designed to establish a common framework for transitioning students between state systems of public education. The MCEC is honored and proud to have worked with the Council of State Governments, in cooperation with the U.S. Department of Defense, to produce the Interstate Compact on Educational Opportunity for Military Children. Today, 13 states have adopted the Compact and legislatures in another 18 states, including Texas, are considering adoption.

Implementing our recommendations would ease the transitions of all mobile children. Between 20 to 50 percent of school-aged children in the U.S. change schools more than once. At least 20 percent of students change schools annually in Texas public schools; this percent is higher in Texas cities, such as Dallas where student mobility was found to be at least 40%. Some studies say the effect of mobility is the greatest for disadvantaged students and greatest in the study of mathematics at all grade levels.

The Military Child Education Coalition thanks you for considering SB 3 and our recommendations for strengthening state policy. The Coalition would like to support your efforts and asks you to call upon us if you require information or testimony from military families or experts. The MCEC serves the military child from birth to age 21, with membership from the Army, Navy, Air Force, Marine Corps, Coast Guard, Department of Defense Schools, public school systems, organizations, and supporting individuals. Our services and advocacy touch military families through our research-based tools, practical professional development, and community-based partnership support. Our efforts directly address the challenges faced by the military child, increase awareness of and response to the challenges in military and supporting communities, and initiate and implement quality, sustainable programs to meet these challenges.

Sincerely,



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Executive Director

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