



March 4, 2021

The Honorable Lloyd J. Austin III
Secretary of Defense
1000 Defense Pentagon
Washington, DC 20301-1000

Dear Secretary Austin,

The **Coalition for Military-Connected Student Success** congratulates you for your successful confirmation as Secretary of Defense. We thank you for your lifelong and continued service to our nation. As a group of organizations dedicated to representing and serving military families and their children, we hope you will contact us as a resource in addressing the concerns of our nation's 1.1 million military-connected children.

We are encouraged to see that First Lady Jill Biden has communicated her intent to elevate the experiences of military-connected students by relaunching the Joining Forces program. We are eager to hear how the Department of Defense plans to engage on those and other efforts to meet the needs and priorities of America's military-connected students and their families.

As you know so well, military-connected students face challenges that are not shared with their civilian counterparts. The average child of military service members moves every two to three years. The regular permanent change of station transition leads to gaps or overlap in instruction, the reconciliation of credits, the changes in setting and environment, all of which can impede the academic progress of these students.

Amid the COVID-19 pandemic, our military-connected students are experiencing the unprecedented challenges faced by all students. Moving forward, concerted efforts must be launched to identify how the pandemic impacted learning for these students and how these gaps can be addressed.

Our eight organizations, all viewed as among the nation's top military family organizations and education organizations serving military-connected students, focus our energy and attention on those issues that impact our service members' families. These children deserve our engagement and investment to ensure that they always have opportunities for success, both in the classroom and beyond it.

In recognition of our shared goals, we have provided an attached overview of the major issues we are determined to address for military-connected children and their families. We hope and ask for your active support on these priorities.

We are eager to work with you and excited to improve outcomes for our nation's military-connected students.

Thank you for your time and consideration. Please contact Jim Cowen, jcowen@forstudentsuccess.org, with any questions.

Signed,

Military Families for High Standards
Association of the United States Army
Military Child Education Coalition
Military Impacted Schools Association

National Association of Federally Impacted Schools
National Math and Science Initiative (NMSI)
National Military Family Association
Association of Defense Communities



The Coalition for Military-Connected Student Success has identified the major issues we are determined to address for military-connected children and their families. We hope and ask for your active support on these priorities.

- **Championing rigorous education standards** in public schools attended by military-connected children.
- **Providing technical assistance** to states as they implement the new Military Student Identifier, which requires states to collect information about military-connected students' academic outcomes as a distinct subgroup in order to better shape policies and direct resources.
- **Supporting the full funding of Impact Aid** — the Federal Government's responsibility for reimbursing school districts for a loss of local tax revenue — and the main mechanism by which the federal government supports schools serving military-connected children.
- **Raising awareness** of the Interstate Compact on Educational Opportunity for Military Children, which has been adopted by all 50 states and the District of Columbia, and addresses transition issues commonly faced by military children as they move to new public school districts and new states.
- **Ensuring the inclusion** of issues facing military and veteran-connected children in the curriculum of institutions of higher learning to help prepare future teachers and other youth-serving professionals in identifying and responding to their needs. Highlighting best practices that have been adopted by schools and military installations to support children and families through school transitions.