

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable James N. Stewart
Acting Under Secretary for Personnel and
Readiness
U.S. Department of Defense
1000 Defense Pentagon
Washington, DC 20301-1000

The Honorable Thomas M. Brady
Director
Department of Defense Education Activity
4800 Mark Center Dr.
Alexandria, VA 22350-1400

Dear Acting Under Secretary Stewart and Director Brady,

We are writing today to express strong concerns with recent policies at the Department of Defense Education Activity eliminating teaching positions and requiring teachers to work more unpaid hours.

It is our understanding that recently the Department of Defense Education Activity has proposed and preemptively implemented an additional 24 hours of work per quarter for teaching staff. Study after study shows that teachers spend countless hours of their own time accomplishing work tasks such as grading papers and coordinating with peers. This mandate coupled with the unique challenges faced by those teachers, who are also military parents, makes this requirement an unneeded burden on military families.

This is occurring in a context where DODEA has eliminated nearly 200 teaching positions which has effectively increased class sizes in some schools and eliminated classes such as foreign language and advanced placement where there may be a limited number of students. The unique needs of military schools and families, especially those stationed overseas, must be taken into consideration when examining the value of these classes.

We are concerned that these policies may have the impact of undermining military children's education by limiting the ability of military spouses, who make up the vast majority of DODEA educators, to serve in these careers. Military spouses who teach at DODEA schools are an important and unique asset to military children coping with parent deployments and frequent PCS moves, thanks to these spouses' personal experience. Yet the additional unpaid hours may prevent a large number of military spouses from meeting these new conditions without heavy strain on their families. This factor coupled with the elimination of some positions will force children into larger classes or online education courses.

The proposed policy has the further disadvantage of undermining military spouses' employment options. This loss of career options and a second income for military families, some of whom are already struggling financially, could force more military members to retire, impacting both readiness and retention.

DODEA schools are consistently top performers in nearly every measureable metric. This is remarkable given the unique challenges faced by both teachers and students, and DODEA must not undermine the educational opportunities for military children.

We urge you to reconsider the implementation of these policies and develop a plan to advance DODEA's priorities without sacrificing both the quality of our DOD schools and the fragile stability of our military families.

Sincerely,



Kirsten Gillibrand
U.S. Senate

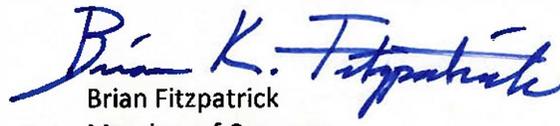
Anthony Brown
Member of Congress



Joe Courtney
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John Garamendi
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Brian K. Fitzpatrick
Member of Congress



Jason Crow
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