

**Oregon Senate Veterans & Emergency Preparedness Committee
Military Student Identifier SB 92**

Testimony

by Mark San Souci

March 10, 2015

Honorable Chair Boquist and committee members, thank you for this opportunity to provide information on Senate Bill 92 sponsored by this committee, to establish a Military Student Identifier for students from military families.

My name is Mark San Souci, retired Air Force officer and now Department of Defense (DoD) Regional State Liaison for the Northwestern states, working for the Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for Military Community and Family Policy.

--Problem: In 2011, the U.S. Government Accountability Office (GAO) reported that: "There is no data available on these [military-connected] students that could be used to assess the academic achievement or educational outcomes, or determine where funding needs are the greatest."

--This issue became a key issue for the Defense State Liaison Office three years ago when the Department of Defense determined that the GAO was right. Although military children experience myriad educational challenges as a result of their parents' transient military service, there was no method of tracking their attendance and academic progress in public schools. Since we began advocating for this, 13 states – including Texas, Florida, North and South Carolina, Alaska, and Montana - are collecting this data with a report only field.

--Apart from these 13 states, only the U.S. Department of Education Impact Aid Program collects data on the number of military-connected students by school districts. This does not include information on specific schools attended or academic performance of military connected students.

--An identifier would identify where military-connected students attend school, their academic performance in reading, math and science, and graduation rates, and how they perform over time. **The identifier would not be intended to create an accountable subgroup, but rather establish a report-only requirement in the same manner as migrant and homeless children, and all the other categories already in Oregon law.** Identifying this information would help military-connected students by:

- **Facilitating data-driven decision making to improve distribution of DoD and local resources, interventions and other support for maximum impact to schools and students in need.**
- **Building awareness at the school and classroom level of students that might be affected by the deployment or service of a parent or guardian or by frequent moves. For example, collecting information on attendance can assist in ascertaining whether military children are absent more often during the deployment of military parents.**
- **You should know that in Fiscal Year 2014, the Department of Defense awarded nearly \$47 million in grants to 44 military-connected school districts to enhance academic and transition support programs. These grants were for STEM, foreign language learning, and special education programs. There is money in the FY 2015 budget for grants, but the first thing DoD needs to know is how many military connected kids would benefit. This identifier will help with that.**

--We realize that Oregon does not have a high number of active duty service members and families. Our last Defense Management Data Center report indicates that there are only about 390 K-12 aged active duty students. But data from Office of Military Community Outreach in Military OneSource indicates **there are 7097 total children in Oregon ages 5-18 when all branches and including all guard and reserve kids are added. Certainly you are well aware that reservists and**

guard members are deployed regularly too, with inherent stressors on those children; and this identifier would count them too.

--Nationally, a Military Student Identifier is broadly supported, and endorsed by numerous school and military-connected associations to include the **Military Child Education Coalition (MCEC), American Association of School Administrators, National Association of State Boards of Education, National Military Family Association, Military Officers Association of America, Blue Star Families, National Guard Association of the United States, Association of the United States Army and the America's Promise Alliance.**

We thank Chair Boquist for sponsoring this initiative and hearing it today. We sincerely hope your future Work Session on this will move it forward. Thank you for taking up this issue, and for your consideration.

I stand for any questions.

Mark San Souci, Northwest Defense State Regional Liaison,
mark.b.sansouci.civ@mail.mil 571-309-4622 or 253-372-2214