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June 13, 2024

U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Representative,

On behalf of the 1.7 million members of the AFT who work in education, healthcare and public services, I write concerning the amendments being offered as part of consideration of the fiscal year 2025 National Defense Authorization Act (H.R. 8070). The AFT represents educators at Department of Defense Education Activity schools in the Europe South region. AFT members teach military and military-connected students at bases in Spain, Italy, Turkey and Bahrain.

The NDAA has historically been a bipartisan bill focused on providing our armed services with the resources they need. From the perspective of teachers working in DoDEA schools, there is much that is commendable about the legislation that is being considered. We are very encouraged to see the extension of student-teacher ratios that are crucial to the success of DoDEA schools and requirements that the DoDEA examine the overuse of standardized testing. We are also heartened to see provisions directing the DoDEA to better share information so that educators can more easily participate in the Public Service Loan Forgiveness program and to reconstitute its transfer program for overseas teachers. These are commonsense, practical solutions that will improve the learning and working conditions in DoDEA schools.

However, several of the amendments being considered today are more partisan than practical and run contrary to the bipartisan tradition of how the NDAA is crafted. In particular, we write to urge you to **OPPOSE** the following amendments:

- #41-43, which would undercut any military diversity, equity and inclusion efforts;
- #46, which would encourage book banning and hatred toward LGBTQIA+ students and educators; and
- #47, which would discourage the teaching of honest history.

Injecting culture-war issues into how the military operates does not promote the strength or unity needed to meet the challenges of the 21st century, nor does it serve the learning needs of military and military-connected students. We urge lawmakers to

step back from this trend. When it comes to education, please focus instead on providing students with the tools and resources they need.

We are also deeply dismayed to see that the base text of H.R. 8070 includes language, in section 572, that would create a voucher program for students eligible to attend DoDEA schools in Bahrain. DoDEA schools provide excellent education to their students. Their outstanding record is well-[documented](#): If DoDEA were a state, the district's test scores would make DoDEA the highest performing one in the U.S. But efforts to privatize education are not about improving student achievement or giving parents an authentic voice in the kinds of services their children receive. Independent studies of voucher programs in states across the country have found that children in voucher programs perform far worse than their peers. In fact, education researchers who study vouchers say their effects are larger than the effects of natural crises like Hurricane Katrina and the COVID-19 pandemic. In state after state, vouchers have led to achievement declines. At the same time, these efforts drain necessary and limited resources away from public schools; strip students of rights, protections and services they are entitled to at public schools; and lack accountability for public funds. We strongly oppose the creation of a voucher program and urge that this provision not be included in the final bill when it goes through conference.

Thank you for considering our views.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Randi Weingarten". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Randi Weingarten
President, AFT

RW : emc opeiu #2 afl-cio