



December 4, 2025

**Position
Statement
Concerning
A-4819
(Donlon)**

Provides increased flexibility in school district enrollment for military-connected students.

The New Jersey School Boards Association (NJSBA), a federation of all local boards of education in New Jersey, believes all children should receive the highest quality education. Further, the NJSBA believes that the federal and state governments and local school boards should provide the resources necessary to advance student academic success and close achievement gaps. Additionally, the NJSBA believes that local boards of education should adopt policies that promote the success of all students by supporting effective practices in curriculum, school culture, management, and organization.

A-4819, although well-intentioned, raises several concerns that should be addressed before advancing through the legislative process. NJSBA lists those concerns below:

- **Transportation**—The bill addresses neither the transportation obligations for a military-connected student who may not be going to school in the district of residence, nor the attendant cost of the travel to the non-residential district. Additionally, the bill fails to address the transportation obligations and costs where the student leaves a district of residence that has not met the NJQSAC performance goals as listed in the bill.
- **State Aid**—Under the School Funding Reform Act, state aid generally follows the child. However, A-4819 raises the issue of which district would receive aid for the child, the district of residence or the district that the student is actually attending. Clarification of which district is responsible for the costs of the military-connected child's education should be addressed.
- **Military Connected Child Definition**—The definition of "military-connected child" is very inclusive. From active-duty personnel to veterans, civilian DoD personnel to current school employees working in a district that receives a "significant" amount of federal impact aid, many students could potentially qualify to receive the benefits of this bill. This bill should have a fiscal note so that policymakers are aware of its fiscal impact and can ensure adequate funding is provided by the state to support the legislation.
- **Possible negative impact on the NJ Interdistrict Public School Choice Program**—The bill permits a military-connected student to essentially bypass the requirements of the Public School Choice Program and guarantees the student a seat in the highly successful program, even where the choice district may not have a Commissioner of Education approved seat available. Currently, if there is greater demand for available seats than can be accommodated in a choice district, a lottery for available seats must be held. A-4819 would bypass the lottery, giving unfair advantage to military-connected students. Additionally, the State of New Jersey has strictly controlled the growth of the public-school choice program by limiting the amount of money allocated to the program. A-4819 disregards those budgetary allocations for military-connected students.

- **A-4819 gives more rights to military-connected students than civilian students**—This bill permits the military-connected student to go to another district where the original district scores less than 80% in the instruction and program category of NJQSAC, a right that no civilian student currently has. Additionally, the instruction and program score may not actually reflect the quality of instruction in the individual school that the military-connected student may actually be attending because NJQSAC is a three-year process. The score received three years ago may not actually reflect the condition of the academic program today.

Military service carries with it special burdens for the families of those who are serving in our armed forces. The State of New Jersey has a responsibility to lessen those burdens where possible for the dependents of those who serve. A-4819 makes a well-intentioned effort to smooth educational barriers for military-connected students. In doing so, A-4819 has inadvertently created concerns for the local districts that serve military families. These concerns must be addressed to create a viable cohesive program of support for military families.

The NJSBA urges the Assembly Military and Veterans Affairs Committee to second reference A-4819 to the Assembly Budget Committee for further consideration of the financial concerns listed above.