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Senator, District 3

132nd MAINE SENATE

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Augusta, ME 04333

Presenting LD 31 “An Act Regarding School Enrollment for Military-connected Students”

Joint Standing Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs

Wednesday, February 5, 2025

Senator Rafferty, Representative Noonan Murphy, and members of the Education and Cultural Affairs Committee. My name is Senator Brad Farrin I am here today to present LD 31, *An Act Regarding School Enrollment for Military-connected Students* and ask for your support.

As you are aware, military families face unique challenges that often require frequent relocations. This bill provides much-needed flexibility to ensure that military-connected students can continue their education at the school of their choice, which is crucial for their emotional, mental, and academic well-being.

Military families have to make significant sacrifices to find housing, secure jobs, and navigate the various stresses that come with constant moves. One of the most difficult challenges is ensuring that children receive a consistent, high-quality education despite these relocations. For many military families, the added burden of changing schools can be overwhelming, especially when it comes to issues like childcare and medical or special needs services for their children.

This bill allows school superintendents to approve the transfer of a military-connected student from one school administrative unit to another, giving families more flexibility in managing the education of their children. It allows military-connected students who are in kindergarten through grade 8 to continue in their current school for the remainder of the school year if their residence changes, and high school students in grades 9 to 12 to continue in their current school through graduation if their residence changes. This flexibility can be crucial for maintaining a sense of stability for students.

If we can help alleviate some of the stress that military families experience through this bill, then we should do so. If a student’s best option is to stay in a school in Kennebec County instead of transferring to a school in York County, we should support that choice, provided the family can make it work.

I had the opportunity to meet with Melissa Willette, the New England Regional Liaison for the Department of Defense, and Laura Cyr from the Department of Education to discuss this bill and collaboratively work on the amendment before you today. This amendment ensures that all parties are in agreement. I urge you to support this legislation, which will provide military-connected students with the option for stability and continuity in their education, allowing them to remain in the school of their choice.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

*Transportation Committee * Government Oversight Committee*
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Be it enacted by the People of the State of Maine as follows:

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2 Sec. 1. 20-A MRSA §5205, sub-§6, ¶A, as amended by PL 2013, c. 456, §1, is 3 further amended to read:

A. Two superintendents may approve the transfer of a student from one school administrative unit to another if:

(1) They find that a transfer is in the student's best interest and the student's parent(s) approves; and or

(2) ~~The student's parent approves student is a military-connected student under subsection 12 whose parent(s) are identified as members of the uniformed services in accordance with §20103, sub-§1 whose parent is currently serving.~~

The superintendents shall notify the commissioner of any transfer approved under this paragraph. If either of the superintendents decides not to approve the transfer, that superintendent shall provide to the parent of the student requesting transfer under this paragraph a written description of the basis of that superintendent's determination.

Sec. 2. 20-A MRSA §5205, sub-§12, ¶D is enacted to read:

D. If the residence of a military-connected student changes, or is scheduled to change, the school administrative unit shall

(1) If the military-connected student's parent is currently serving, allow the student to continue the student's education in the student's current school; or allow early enrollment in the student's prospective school as is appropriate for the family.

(2) If the military-connected student's parent is not currently serving, either:

(a) If the student is enrolled in kindergarten to grade 8, allow the student to continue the student's education in the student's current school for the duration of that school year; or

(b) If the student is enrolled in grades 9 to 12, allow the student to continue the student's education in the student's current school through graduation.(c)

(a) Transfers during a student's senior year will conform with §20107, sub-§3.