

# Education Alert

Legislation of Vital Concern to Miami-Dade County's Students

**DATE:** May 10, 2018  
**TO:** Members of the Miami-Dade Congressional Delegation  
**FROM:** Alberto M. Carvalho, Superintendent of Schools  
**SUBJECT:** **OPPOSE ANY DIVERSION OF PUBLIC IMPACT AID TO PRIVATE USES**

A bill to create Military Education Savings Accounts (H.R. 5199 / S. 2517) is under House consideration as an amendment to the FY 2019 National Defense Authorization bill. Miami-Dade County Public Schools (M-DCPS), along with organizations representing the interests of military families, urges Congress to **oppose any diversion of the \$1.3 billion Impact Aid Program away from impacted public schools and into unaccountable private uses.**

**BACKGROUND:** The concept of private school vouchers was debated and cut from the bipartisan reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA), but was endorsed by Education Secretary Betsy DeVos for military families in April 2017. While Title I portability targeted low-income schools, H.R. 5199 would fund private education savings accounts from Impact Aid (Title VII of ESEA) for school districts that serve military families.

- Undermines purpose of Impact Aid. A national private-benefit program conflicts with the Impact Aid rationale: to compensate public school systems serving military bases or other federal properties, which are exempt from local taxes that fund education. Since 1950, Impact Aid has provided “payments in lieu of taxes” to offset this lower tax base.
- Harmful effects of privatization. Florida ranks fifth in the number of federally connected children, though states with higher concentrations receive more funding. H.R. 5199 would rapidly deplete Impact Aid by diverting at least \$2,500 per student to private uses, rather than equalizing tax resources for burdened districts. For “regular” districts (only 3 percent are “heavily impacted”), this is double the 2017 basic support average of \$1,254 per pupil. Where concentrations of federally connected students are lower, schools get less; for areas under 20 percent, the average payment was \$231. And as each district’s Impact Aid is exhausted, most military youth will still attend their local public schools.
- Lack of accountability. As few families can afford private tuition, even with \$2,500, the bill liberally awards federal funds for a long list of private, education-related uses: from pre-school, home tutors, and technology to after-school, summer programs, and college. Self-reported expenses, unmonitored except by a fraud hotline and federal audits “as needed,” are inherently unaccountable and subject to widespread fraud and abuse.
- Opposition from military families. Ironically, H.R. 5199 is opposed by leading military service organizations. The 25-organization Military Coalition calls it “counterproductive to defund Impact Aid, a successful program that has long enjoyed bipartisan support, in order to provide a benefit of questionable value to a minority of military students.”

**ACTION NEEDED:** We urge Congress to **oppose any effort to divert Impact Aid into a privatized national benefit program, at the expense of federally impacted public districts serving military families.** For further information, please contact Ms. Eva M. Regueira, Ed.S., Director of Intergovernmental Affairs and Grants Administration, at 305-995-3107.

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