



MANPOWER AND
RESERVE AFFAIRS

OFFICE OF THE ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF DEFENSE

1500 DEFENSE PENTAGON
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20301-1500

March 11, 2021

The Honorable Samuel A. Azzinaro
82 Smith Street
Providence, RI 02903-1105

RE: H5928 – Support

Dear Representative Azzinaro:

On behalf of military families and the Department of Defense, I am writing to express support for the policy changes proposed in Rhode Island House Bill H5928, a bill that addresses residency requirements for attendance at post-secondary public institutions for the purpose of tuition.

My name is Christopher Arnold and I am the Northeast Region Liaison for the United States Department of Defense-State Liaison Office, operating under the direction of Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness, and the Deputy Assistant Secretary for Military Community and Family Policy. Our mission is to serve as a resource to state policymakers as they work to address quality of life issues for military families.

Many states offer in-state tuition to our military families based on the fact they have incurred multiple moves throughout K-12. In addition, they may not have met the requirement to become a “resident” in the state and are forced to pay out of state tuition rates. This causes an undue financial hardship to the military family or further limits the school choice for our military college age students.

Approximately 185,000 U.S. military children move between schools annually and are routinely reassigned with their military sponsors to new duty stations in the summer, due to mission and training requirements. As a result of these summer moves, students typically miss important education application dates that occur in the spring. We believe that a spouse or child of an active member of the armed forces assigned to duty in a state at the time of the dependent receiving a letter of acceptance should be deemed an in-state resident for purposes of determining tuition and fees, regardless of the service member’s follow-on status provided the student is continuously enrolled.

Considering there are over 90,000 college aged military children, we have placed this issue in our “Top Ten” list of prioritized Personnel and Readiness issues.

We are grateful for the tremendous efforts that Rhode Island has historically made to support our military members and their families. We appreciate the opportunity to support the policy reflected in H5928, and are especially grateful to Representative Vella-Wilkinson for introducing this important piece of legislation. Thank you for taking the time to consider this issue. Please feel free to contact me with any questions.

Sincerely,

CHRISTOPHER R. ARNOLD
Northeast Region Liaison
Defense-State Liaison Office