

## **SUPPORT DEFENSE AUTHORIZATION PROVISION ON ENSURING Parity for ALL Public School Graduates**

The House version of the FY12 National Defense Authorization Bill (H.R. 1540) includes a provision that would provide parity for online public school graduates in military recruitment and enlistment policies. The National Alliance for Public Charter Schools and International Association for K-12 Online Learning support this provision and urge the Senate to include it in their FY12 defense authorization legislation.

### **Background**

Current military recruiting policies classify candidates for military enrollment into three “tiers”:

- **Tier I- "brick and mortar"** high school diploma graduate
- **Tier II-** alternative high school credentials including test-based equivalency diploma (GED), occupational program certificate of attendance, correspondence school diploma, home study diploma, or high school certificate of attendance
- **Tier III-** no secondary school credential

### **Current DOD Policy Limits Enlistment Opportunities for Graduates of Online Public Schools.**

DOD policy has not kept pace with the developments in K-12 education. Graduates of online public schools – operated either by charter schools or school districts – are currently considered Tier II candidates for the purposes of military enrollment – the equivalent of a GED – despite the fact that they fulfill all of the same graduation requirements established by their state of residence as their brick-and-mortar counterparts. Online public schools follow federal and state guidelines, adhere to accountability standards, including attendance and instructional requirements, and use certified teachers that oversee instruction. Graduating with a degree from an online public school is equivalent to graduating with a degree from a brick-and-mortar public school and should be treated as such.

### **Military Data Used to Establish Tier Status is Outdated, Does Not Disaggregate for Online Public Schools**

Online public schools and blended schools (part time online, part time classroom-based) are a new and rapidly growing model in public education. The Department of Defense does not have specific data to show that the attrition rate for students graduating from an online public school differs from that of Tier I or Tier II graduates. The Tier II category, which includes recipients of traditional GEDs, homeschoolers, and graduates of alternative “correspondence schools,” was created before online public schools existed.

A growing number of families including military families, are choosing online public schools for their children and policy should be revised to keep pace with changing trends in education.

### **House Legislation Updates Military Recruiting Policy**

The version of the FY12 National Defense Authorization Bill (H.R. 1540) that has passed the House of Representatives includes a provision that would provide parity for online public school graduates in military recruitment and enlistment policies (Title V, Section 525—see attached). We fully support this provision and urge the Senate to similarly pass legislation that would update military recruiting policies so that all public school graduates are considered Tier I candidates for military enrollment.

**SEC. 525—POLICY ON MILITARY RECRUITMENT AND ENLISTMENT OF GRADUATES OF SECONDARY SCHOOLS.**

**a) EQUAL TREATMENT FOR SECONDARY SCHOOL GRADUATES.—**

1) **EQUAL TREATMENT.**—For the purposes of recruitment and enlistment in the Armed Forces, the Secretary of a military department shall treat a graduate described in paragraph (2) in the same manner as a graduate of a secondary school (as defined in section 9101(38) of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 (20 U.S.C. 7801(38)).

2) **COVERED GRADUATES.**—Paragraph (1) applies with respect to person who—

A) receives a diploma from a secondary school that is legally operating; or

B) otherwise completes a program of secondary education in compliance with the education laws of the State in which the person resides.

**b) POLICY ON RECRUITMENT AND ENLISTMENT.**—Not later than 180 days after the date of the enactment of this Act, the Secretary of Defense shall prescribe a policy on recruitment and enlistment that incorporates the following:

1) Means for identifying persons described in subsection (a)(2) who are qualified recruitment and enlistment in the Armed Forces, which may include the use of a non-cognitive aptitude test, adaptive personality assessment, or other operational attrition screening tool to predict performance, behaviors, and attitudes of potential recruits that influence attrition and the ability to adapt to a regimented life in the Armed Forces.

2) Means for assessing how qualified persons fulfill their enlistment obligation.

3) Means for maintaining data, by each diploma source, which can be used to analyze attrition rates among qualified persons.

**c) RECRUITMENT PLAN.**—As part of the policy required by subsection (b), the Secretary of each of the military departments shall develop a recruitment plan that includes a marketing strategy for targeting various segments of potential recruits with all types of secondary education credentials.

**d) COMMUNICATION PLAN.**—The Secretary of each of the military departments shall develop a communication plan to ensure that the policy and recruitment plan are understood by military recruiters.