

1 State of Arkansas
2 95th General Assembly
3 Regular Session, 2025
4

A Bill

HOUSE BILL 1545

5 By: Representative K. Brown
6 By: Senator J. English
7

For An Act To Be Entitled

8
9 AN ACT TO AMEND THE ARKANSAS MILITARY CHILD SCHOOL
10 TRANSITIONS ACT OF 2021; AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES.
11

Subtitle

12
13 TO AMEND THE ARKANSAS MILITARY CHILD
14 SCHOOL TRANSITIONS ACT OF 2021.
15
16

17 BE IT ENACTED BY THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF ARKANSAS:
18

19 SECTION 1. DO NOT CODIFY. Legislative findings and intent.

20 (a) The General Assembly finds:

21 (1) Arkansas adopted the Interstate Compact on Educational
22 Opportunity for Military Children in 2013, but found it ineffective in
23 supporting National Guard and highly mobile active-duty families;

24 (2) To untether support for military families, Arkansas
25 established the Arkansas Military Child School Transitions Act of 2021,
26 expanding eligibility and resources offered to uniformed services families;

27 (3) Arkansas is the only state that has taken an independent,
28 parallel path outside of the compact to better serve our highly mobile
29 uniformed services families;

30 (4) On December 31, 2024, the United States Department of
31 Defense reported to the United States Congress that, "States could consider
32 the benefits of implementing the Arkansas model for a statute outside the
33 Compact"; and

34 (5) Arkansas is recognized for initiative, innovation, and
35 responsiveness to meeting emerging needs of uniformed services families.

36 (b) This act further improves the Arkansas Military Child School



1 Transitions Act of 2021, § 6-28-101 et seq., by:

2 (1) Eliminating the one-year limitation on eligibility of
 3 children of Gold Star families and medically separated or retired families to
 4 be covered by this act;

5 (2) Allowing public schools to apply provisions of this act to
 6 all students who apply for enrollment in a public school in addition to those
 7 students who are dependents of members of the uniformed services;

8 (3) Defining actions for military services families to
 9 accomplish when applying for enrollment in advance of their arrival in
 10 Arkansas;

11 (4) Expanding authority of receiving districts' special
 12 education staff members to proactively collaborate with sending districts to
 13 facilitate a smooth transition of incoming students with disabilities;

14 (5) Allowing public schools to approve excused absences and
 15 virtual course enrollment for children of Gold Star families to attend mental
 16 health programs and family resiliency programs; and

17 (6) Providing for the Purple Star School Program development and
 18 administration.

19
 20 SECTION 2. Arkansas Code § 6-28-105 is amended to read as follows:

21 6-28-105. Application.

22 (a) This chapter shall apply to dependent children of:

23 (1) Members of the active duty and activated reserve components
 24 of the uniformed services;

25 (2) ~~Members or veterans~~ Veterans of the uniformed services who
 26 were ~~severely~~ injured in the line of duty and are medically ~~discharged~~
 27 ~~separated~~ or retired ~~for a period of one (1) year following the medical~~
 28 ~~discharge or retirement;~~

29 (3) Members of the uniformed services who die while on active
 30 duty or as a result of injuries sustained while on active duty ~~for a period~~
 31 ~~of one (1) year following the death;~~

32 (4) Dual status military technicians; and

33 (5) Traditional members of the National Guard and reserve
 34 components of the ~~United States Armed Forces~~ armed forces who are relocating
 35 to the state for employment or to serve as a member of an Arkansas-based
 36 reserve component unit.

~~(b) This chapter shall not apply to the dependent children of:~~

~~(1) Inactive members of the National Guard and reserve components of the United States Armed Forces;~~

~~(2) Retired members of the uniformed services, except as provided under subdivision (a)(3) of this section; and~~

~~(3) Other United States Department of Defense personnel and other federal or state agency civilian and contract employees who are not considered members of the uniformed services.~~

~~(e)(1)(b)(1)~~ This chapter includes provisions and extends application eligibility beyond the scope of the Interstate Compact on Educational Opportunity for Military Children, § 6-4-301 et seq.

(2) In complying with this chapter, sending districts and receiving districts may request the assistance of sending districts and receiving districts outside of the state to provide services to uniformed services families transferring to or from the state who are covered under this chapter but may not be covered under the interstate compact.

(c) A public school may extend the provisions of this chapter to all students relocating to the public school district or enrolling in the public school under the Arkansas Opportunity Public School Choice Act, § 6-18-227, or the Public School Choice Act of 2015, § 6-18-1901 et seq.

SECTION 3. Arkansas Code § 6-28-108 is amended to read as follows:

6-28-108. Advance enrollment.

~~(a)(1)~~ Members of the uniformed services shall under § 6-28-105 who wish to enroll their children in public school should, as soon as possible, provide advance notice to public schools regarding the enrollment of a student under this chapter to ensure the best opportunity for a smooth transition for their children.

(b) Upon receipt of official assignment notice or assignment orders, the parent, foster parent, legal guardian, person having lawful control of a child, or person standing in loco parentis to a child of a member of the uniformed services may enroll, register, and coordinate education services for his or her child, including without limitation a child with special education needs or a child with a disability, in the public school of his or her choice by:

(1) Determining, in consultation with military and public school

1 district officials, the public school in which he or she prefers to enroll
 2 his or her child according to requirements under § 6-18-1909;

3 (2) Contacting the public school's designated military family
 4 education coordinator with any questions or issues raised or information
 5 needed by the parent, legal guardian, person having lawful control of a
 6 child, or person standing in loco parentis to a child; and

7 (3) Remotely submitting electronically an enrollment application
 8 for his or her child that shall include required documentation, including
 9 without limitation:

10 (A) A copy of the official military assignment notice or
 11 official assignment orders and military identification credentials of the
 12 member of the uniformed services;

13 (B) The child's unofficial education record and
 14 immunization records;

15 (C) Current coursework for the school in which the student
 16 is enrolled if the coursework is not included in the student's unofficial
 17 education record;

18 (D) A copy of the student's individualized education
 19 program, family service plan under the Individuals with Disabilities
 20 Education Act, 20 U.S.C. § 1400 et seq., or plan under section 504 of the
 21 Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended, as applicable; and

22 (E) A list of any extracurricular activities in which the
 23 student participates.

24 ~~(2)(c) When a public school receives notice and an enrollment~~
 25 ~~application from a military family under subdivision (a)(1) of this section,~~
 26 ~~the public school shall treat the notice as a provisional enrollment and~~
 27 ~~provide the student with materials regarding:~~

28 (1) Provisionally enroll, provide placement for, and enter
 29 academic course requests on behalf of the incoming student based on the
 30 student's education record provided by his or her family or the sending
 31 district;

32 (2) Provide the uniformed services family with information
 33 either directly or on a Military Family link on the public school's or public
 34 school district's website regarding:

35 (A) ~~Academic courses~~ Career-ready pathways and other
 36 academic or education programs offered;

1 (B) ~~Electives~~ Required academic courses for each
 2 curriculum and elective course options;

3 (C) ~~Sports~~ School and community-sponsored extracurricular
 4 activities, including without limitation individual and team sports, clubs,
 5 junior reserve officer training corps opportunities, and Purple Star School
 6 program ambassadors; and

7 (D) Contact information for the designated military family
 8 education coordinator and the Purple Star School program military family
 9 education facilitator, if applicable; and

10 ~~(D)~~(E) Other relevant information regarding the public
 11 school.

12 ~~(3)~~(d) A public school:

13 ~~(A)~~(1) Shall, in determining the acceptance of a student's
 14 enrollment in the public school, consider the:

15 (A) The student's enrollment application date and the
 16 anticipated date of enrollment of a the student under subdivision (a)(1)
 17 subsection (a) of this section in light of:

18 ~~(i)~~(B) Class sizes;

19 ~~(ii)~~(C) Course prerequisites or conflicts; and

20 ~~(iii)~~(D) The availability of elective courses;

21 ~~(B)~~(2)(A) May preregister a student in anticipation of the
 22 student's enrollment under subdivision (a)(1) of this section; and Shall not
 23 deny a student enrollment in the public school or the public school district
 24 under this section unless there is a lack of capacity.

25 (B) A lack of capacity may be claimed by a public school
 26 district only if:

27 (i) The public school district has reached the
 28 maximum student-to-teacher ratio allowed under federal law, state law, the
 29 Standards for Accreditation for Public Schools and School Districts, state
 30 rules, or other applicable federal regulations; and

31 (ii) The claim of lack of capacity is timely and
 32 consistent with state and federal law;

33 ~~(C)~~(3) May seek waivers from the State Board of Education to
 34 accommodate a student under this section, including without limitation
 35 required class ratios Shall not discriminate on the basis of gender, national
 36 origin, race, ethnicity, religion, military family status, or disability;

1 (4) Notify a prospective student's family in writing regarding
2 whether the student's enrollment has been accepted or rejected within fifteen
3 (15) calendar days of receiving the student's enrollment application and
4 supporting documentation; and

5 (5) As soon as practicable, request that a sending district
6 provide a student's official education record as specified by § 6-28-107 to
7 confirm the student's provisional enrollment, placement, and course
8 preregistration conditions.

9 ~~(b)(1)(e)(1)~~ A student under this section shall receive equitable
10 access to academic courses.

11 (2)(A) A receiving district may enter academic course requests
12 on behalf of an incoming student under this section based on the student's
13 transcript of information sent by the student's family or the student's
14 sending district.

15 (B) Special power of attorney relative to the guardianship
16 of a student is sufficient for purposes of enrollment and all other actions
17 requiring parental participation and consent.

18 ~~(e)(1)(f)(1)~~ A receiving district shall not charge local tuition to a
19 student who transitions to the receiving district under this section and who
20 has been placed in the care of a noncustodial parent or other person standing
21 in loco parentis who lives in a jurisdiction other than that of the custodial
22 parent.

23 (2) A student who has been placed in the care of a noncustodial
24 parent or other person standing in loco parentis who lives in a jurisdiction
25 other than that of the custodial parent may continue to attend the school in
26 which he or she was enrolled while residing with the custodial parent.

27 ~~(d)(g)~~ A receiving district shall ensure a student who transitions
28 under this section has the opportunity to participate in extracurricular
29 activities, regardless of application deadlines, and to the extent that the
30 student is otherwise qualified.

31
32 SECTION 4. Arkansas Code § 6-28-109 is amended to read as follows:
33 6-28-109. Virtual course enrollment.

34 (a) At the request of a military family, a receiving district may
35 enroll an inbound transitioning child of a military family in virtual
36 distance-learning or digital coursework, if available, to facilitate a smooth

1 transition between the student's previous coursework and the curriculum best
2 suited to ensure educational success in his or her new school.

3 (b) To prevent a student from losing course credit due to absences, a
4 public school may approve a student who has been granted one (1) or more
5 excused absences to attend a mental health or family resilience program under
6 § 6-28-114 to:

7 (1) Access school coursework virtually; or

8 (2) Transfer to a virtual coursework program.

9
10 SECTION 5. Arkansas Code § 6-28-113(b), concerning requirements a
11 receiving district must adhere to with regard to a student's special
12 education services under the Arkansas Military Child School Transitions Act
13 of 2021, is amended to read as follows:

14 (b) A receiving district:

15 (1) Shall make reasonable accommodations and modifications to
16 address the needs of incoming students with disabilities under this section;
17 ~~and~~

18 (2) May perform subsequent evaluations to ensure a student who
19 transitions under this chapter has been appropriately placed in the receiving
20 district as soon as possible upon the student's arrival at the receiving
21 district;

22 (3) May request a meeting with a student's parents or legal
23 guardians and the individualized education program team at the sending
24 district from which the student transferred before the student's arrival at
25 the receiving district;

26 (4) May, upon review of a student's existing individualized
27 education program and with parental consent, request an evaluation by the
28 sending district, if the student is still enrolled in the sending district;

29 (5) May request an in-person meeting with the student's parents
30 or legal guardians and the student to confirm planned services upon the
31 adoption by the public school of the student's existing or amended
32 individualized education program; and

33 (6) May take any other action to ensure a student's smooth
34 transition under this chapter.

35
36 SECTION 6. Arkansas Code § 6-28-114 is amended to read as follows:

1 6-28-114. Student excused absence.

2 (a) If a student's parent or legal guardian has been called to duty
 3 for, is on leave from, or has immediately returned from deployment, the
 4 student may be granted additional excused absences at the discretion of the
 5 public school in which he or she is enrolled.

6 (b) When recommended by a student's family physician or mental health
 7 professional, a public school may grant an excused absence to a student under
 8 this chapter for the student to attend a mental health or family resilience
 9 program for children of members of the uniformed services who died while on
 10 active duty, died as a result of injuries sustained while on active duty, or
 11 suffered another confirmed physical or mental trauma.

12
 13 SECTION 7. Arkansas Code § 6-28-116 is amended to read as follows:

14 6-28-116. ~~New student reception programs~~— Military family education
 15 coordinators.

16 (a) ~~A Each public school with twenty (20) or more children of military~~
 17 ~~families enrolled as students under this chapter or a public school district~~
 18 ~~with at least three thousand (3,000) enrolled public school students~~ district
 19 and open-enrollment public charter school shall:

20 (1) ~~Incorporate into the policies of the public school district~~
 21 ~~specific procedures that outline actions to take in support of students who~~
 22 ~~are the children of military families who transition to and from the public~~
 23 ~~school district; and~~

24 (2)(A)(1) ~~Designate in each public school district~~ a military
 25 family education coordinator to serve as the primary point of contact for
 26 each child of a military family and his or her parent or legal guardian;

27 (2) Annually by September 1 provide to the Division of
 28 Elementary and Secondary Education the name and contact information of the
 29 military family education coordinator; and

30 (3) Post in a section designated for Military Families on the
 31 website of the public school the contact information for the military family
 32 education coordinator.

33 (B)(b) ~~The Each~~ public school military family education coordinator
 34 shall:

35 (i)(1) ~~Have Possess~~ specialized knowledge regarding the
 36 educational needs ~~of children of military families and the obstacles that~~

~~children of military families face in obtaining an education and unique challenges faced by children of uniformed services families; and~~

~~(ii)(2) Be included in the establishment and adoption of a public school district's and public school's parent and family engagement plan as required under § 6-15-1702; and~~

(3) Serve as a navigator for uniformed services families by:

(A) Connecting the uniformed services families to appropriate public school resources; and

(B) Connecting families with other uniformed services families in the public school upon request.

~~(C) The Division of Elementary and Secondary Education shall supply relevant resources for the orientation and training of public school military family education coordinators under this section.~~

SECTION 8. Arkansas Code § 6-28-117 is amended to read as follows:

6-28-117. Reporting enrollment of children of members of the ~~uniformed services armed forces~~ - Definition.

(a) The Division of Elementary and Secondary Education shall require a public school to report the enrollment of a student who is a child of a uniformed services family with a parent who is an active duty or reserve component member of the armed forces as required by the Every Student Succeeds Act, 20 U.S.C. § 6311, as it existed on January 1, 2025:

(1) In the Arkansas Public School Computer Network; or

(2) As established by rule if the public school or public school district does not report information through the Arkansas Public School Computer Network.

(b) As used in this section, "armed forces" means a member of the active duty or reserve components of the United States Army, United States Navy, United States Air Force, United States Marine Corps, United States Space Force, United States Coast Guard, and National Guard.

SECTION 9. Arkansas Code § 6-28-204(b), concerning the duties of the Arkansas Council for Military Children is amended to read as follows:

(b) The duties of the council are to:

(1) Assist state and local education agencies in the promotion and, communication, delivery, and assessment of the provisions of this

1 chapter to inform state education authorities, public school district
 2 officials, military commanders, and uniformed services families by:

3 (A) Assisting in the development, publication, and
 4 distribution through schools and military commands of a digital family
 5 guidebook that provides information on the provisions of this chapter;

6 (B) At least biennially publicly surveying uniformed
 7 services families to assess awareness of this chapter, provisions of the
 8 Arkansas Opportunity Public School Choice Act, § 6-18-227, provisions of the
 9 Public School Choice Act of 2015, § 6-18-1901 et seq., available military
 10 family resources, and unmet uniformed services family needs; and

11 (C) Developing and promulgating student arrival and
 12 departure surveys of uniformed services families to provide an assessment of
 13 the effectiveness of this chapter and other related programs;

14 (2) Assist state and local education agencies with the
 15 orientation and training of district military family education coordinators
 16 and school military education facilitators on provisions of this chapter;

17 (3) Develop and promote the Purple Star School program as
 18 required by § 6-28-302;

19 ~~(3)(4)~~ Assist in the development and delivery of programs that
 20 inform current and former uniformed services families, including Gold Star
 21 families, of the need for self-identification in order to assure accurate
 22 accounting of children of uniformed services families enrolled in public
 23 school districts to self-identify to assure:

24 (A) They are recognized for their service; and

25 (B) That the student is accounted for in all applicable
 26 programs for which the student qualifies; and

27 ~~(4)(5)~~ Assist in the development and administration of programs
 28 recognizing education agencies, public schools, and leaders who have
 29 established or contributed to programs facilitating successful school
 30 transitions of children of uniformed services families.

31
 32 SECTION 10. Arkansas Code § 6-28-204(i), concerning administrative
 33 staff to support the Chair of the Arkansas Council for Military Children, is
 34 amended to read as follows:

35 (i) The council shall post on its website or post by utilizing another
 36 form of public notice, including without limitation social media, information

1 for uniformed services families, including without limitation information
2 regarding:

3 (1) The purpose, duties, membership composition, meeting
4 agendas, and meeting minutes of the council;

5 (2) Resources to assist uniformed services families with making
6 decisions concerning school choice and educational freedom accounts;

7 (3) Guidance for advance enrollment;

8 (4) Contact information for military family education
9 coordinators; and

10 (5) Purple Star School Program highlights and contact
11 information for military family education facilitators.

12 (j) The division shall provide administrative staff support to the Chair
13 of the Arkansas Council for Military Children to assist with the achievement
14 of the purpose and the administration of duties of the council.

15
16 SECTION 11. Arkansas Code Title 6, Chapter 28, is amended to add
17 additional sections to read as follows:

18 Subchapter 3 – Purple Star School Program

19
20 6-28-301. Purple Star School Program.

21 (a) Each public school with twenty (20) or more children of military
22 families enrolled annually by October 1 shall:

23 (1) Adopt the Purple Star School Program developed by the
24 Arkansas Council for Military Children and approved by the Division of
25 Elementary and Secondary Education; and

26 (2) Survey arriving and departing uniform services families to
27 assess the effectiveness of programs and services under this chapter as
28 specified by the Division of Elementary and Secondary Education.

29 (b) The purpose of the Purple Star School Program shall be to:

30 (1) Assist children of uniformed services families by addressing
31 the educational, social, and emotional challenges the children of uniformed
32 services families face during their transition to a new school; and

33 (2) Keep children of uniformed services families on track to
34 enroll and excel in college, enter the workforce, and become life-ready.

35 (c) The council-developed Purple Star School Program required under
36 subsection (a) of this section shall:

1 (1) Require each public school to designate a military family
 2 education facilitator to:

3 (A) Identify military-connected students who are enrolled
 4 in the public school and inform public school teachers of those students;

5 (B) Serve as the Purple Star School Program point of
 6 contact for the public school, each child of a military family, and the
 7 parent, legal guardian, person having lawful control of, or person standing
 8 in loco parentis to a child of a military family; and

9 (C) Assist in determining and coordinating public school
 10 services and programs for military-connected students;

11 (2) Require a designated public school district military family
 12 education facilitator, public school military family education coordinator,
 13 and public school staff to complete council-recommended and division-approved
 14 initial and continuing education on identifying the needs and unique
 15 challenges faced by children of members of the uniformed services;

16 (3) Require each public school district to include on its
 17 website a "Military Families" section that informs uniformed services
 18 families of:

19 (A) The student enrollment application process;

20 (B) Available education pathways;

21 (C) Notable public school or public school district Purple
 22 Star School Programs;

23 (D) Public school district military family education
 24 coordinator contact information; and

25 (E) Public school military family education facilitator
 26 contact information;

27 (4)(A) Require each public school or public school district to
 28 establish a volunteer student-to-student peer ambassador program that shall
 29 be open to all enrolled students who want to contribute.

30 (B) The volunteer student-to-student peer ambassador
 31 program required under subdivision (c)(4)(A) of this section shall:

32 (i) Connect and welcome inbound students ahead of
 33 their transition to a public school;

34 (ii) Assist with the provision of new student
 35 orientation; and

36 (iii) Assist new students with establishing social

1 connections at their new school;

2 (5) Establish school and community events to honor and recognize
3 members of the uniformed services and military-connected students;

4 (6) Ensure that a public school or public school district
5 appoints a volunteer uniformed services member, military spouse, or
6 representative from a military installation or unit to serve on the school
7 community and family engagement committee;

8 (7) Ensure that a public school district's or public school's
9 parent and family engagement plan required under § 6-15-1702 addresses
10 relevant military family issues and resources; and

11 (8) Require public schools and public school districts to
12 collaborate with military commands to encourage uniformed services families
13 to self-identify their military status.

14 (d) The Purple Star School Program required under subsection (a) of
15 this section may authorize public schools and public school districts to
16 expand their Purple Star School Program to include community-level
17 initiatives, including without limitation:

18 (1) Engaging community organizations, local businesses, and
19 military installations to enhance resources and support for military-
20 connected students and their families;

21 (2) Organizing community events that raise awareness of
22 military-connected students and their contributions; and

23 (3) Establishing partnerships with regional stakeholders to
24 enhance Purple Star School Program efforts while fulfilling all requirements
25 for the Purple Star School Program established by the division.

26 (e) As used in this section, a "military-connected student" is:

27 (1) An incoming or a currently enrolled student who is a child
28 or dependent of a current or former active or reserve component uniformed
29 services member;

30 (2) A child of a uniformed services member who died while on
31 active duty or as a result of injuries sustained while on active duty;

32 (3) A student who is a sibling of a uniformed services member;

33 (4) A student who has enlisted in the uniformed services; or

34 (5) A Junior Reserve Officers' Training Corps cadet.

35
36 6-28-302. Arkansas Council for Military Children – Purple Star School

1 Program – Duties.

2 The Arkansas Council for Military Children shall:

3 (1) Develop and review biennially and amend as necessary the
4 Purple Star School Program model;

5 (2) When developing, reviewing, and amending the Purple Star
6 School Program as required under subdivision (1) of this section, incorporate
7 provisions prescribed by the council, the Military Child Education Coalition,
8 and other relevant, recognized authorities;

9 (3) Use the Purple Star School Program’s application and renewal
10 process along with interdistrict collaboration events to drive continuous
11 improvement of the program;

12 (4) Define required and optional Purple Star School Program
13 provisions established by § 6-28-301 and performance standards;

14 (5) Establish phase-in timing and training, if required, when
15 adopting or amending Purple Star School Program provisions; and

16 (6) Establish a recognition program for public schools, public
17 school districts, and private schools that meet Purple Star School Program
18 standards as defined and evaluated by the council.

19
20 6-28-303. Division of Elementary and Secondary Education – Purple Star
21 School Program – Duties.

22 The Division of Elementary and Secondary Education shall:

23 (1) Provide relevant resources for the orientation and training
24 of public school district military family education coordinators and public
25 school military family education facilitators under this chapter;

26 (2) Administer the Purple Star School Program;

27 (3) Provide administrative and logistical support to the
28 Arkansas Council for Military Children to develop the program; and

29 (4) Promulgate and incorporate Purple Star School program rules
30 into the rules the division promulgates under this chapter.

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