

For Submission to the Virginia House of Delegates Committee on Education
Support for HB 1929

While serving overseas, members of the U.S. Foreign Service have the opportunity to meet new people, experience different cultures, and learn new languages while representing the people of the United States as diplomats abroad. These amazing experiences are also coupled with sacrifices and challenges. Among them are constantly changing schools from one country to another, not growing up with a traditional U.S. education, and children not understanding the reality of their peers in the United States.

Dependents of Foreign Service members often attend multiple different schools throughout their educational tenure. Their return to the United States after many years overseas usually requires a great deal of planning and preparation. For Foreign Service members with Virginia residency, Virginia Governor's Schools are fantastic options for advanced secondary education. They allow students to pursue their passions in a nurturing and supportive environment while also preparing them for success at the university level.

In preparation to apply to these Governor's Schools, children of Foreign Service members work hard to earn good grades and meet the eligibility requirements necessary for admission, often while living overseas. However, that is with one major exception through no fault of their own, they are not physically present in the school district at the time of application. Instead, Foreign Service children will usually be in the school district when the school year begins, as their families are stationed overseas before then.

Foreign Service families cannot count on the considerations given to military colleagues for their service to the people of the United States. Sometimes, these Governor's Schools discourage Foreign Service members from even applying because there is no way around this requirement. Often, Foreign Service dependent's academic dreams and hard work are completely disregarded when they are told they cannot even try to compete for admission.

AFSA urges the Virginia General Assembly to consider its constituents who sacrifice everything to serve our country as diplomats. Foreign Service families leave behind all they have ever known to live in far away and sometimes dangerous places, but when they return home, their service is not recognized, and their children are penalized for something completely out of their control. Please pass House Bill 1929.