

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

September 21, 2022

Department of Defense Education Activity
4800 Mark Center Drive
Alexandria, VA 22350-1400

Dear Director Brady:

We write to you today regarding urgent matters concerning contract negotiations between the Overseas Federation of Teachers (OFT) and the Department of Defense Education Activity (DoDEA) that have been brought to our attention.

The OFT represents hundreds of teachers who work in DoDEA schools in Italy, Spain, Bahrain, and Turkey. OFT and DoDEA are parties to a 28-year-old collective bargaining agreement that has been the foundation of a cooperative relationship where the inclusion of teacher voices has led to successful outcomes for military-connected children. However, it has been brought to our attention that DoDEA's Labor-Management Employee Relations (LMER) representatives are refusing to bargain with the union over important professional practices in DoDEA's Europe South schools that are commonplace in school districts throughout our country. We are also concerned that DoDEA LMER may be advancing regressive proposals on union rights that are necessary for the OFT to represent its members and the military-connected families they serve.

It is our understanding DoDEA has stated that the existence and length of a duty-free meal period, known as duty-free lunch, is nonnegotiable for the educators of military families abroad. Additionally, OFT claims that DoDEA refuses to bargain over teacher prep time. It is also our understanding that DoDEA is proposing massive cuts to OFT's official time (time off to represent bargaining unit employees and serve members' interests) – taking 50 days away from what they currently have – as well as the total elimination of in-person training days and in-person joint labor-management meetings, which will make it extraordinarily difficult, if not impossible, for the union to represent its members and function effectively.

As members of the House and Senate Armed Services Committees, we believe that DoDEA's reported actions are out of step with President Biden's commitment to protect the federal workforce and ensure a meaningful right to collective bargaining as set out in Executive Order 14003. As the President noted, the Federal Government should be a model employer, and it is indeed the policy of the United States to encourage union organizing and collective bargaining. As such, we urge DoDEA to bargain in good faith and advance proposals that both parties can meaningfully negotiate. These parties have a long history of respectful labor relations. We sincerely hope this history can continue. We thank you for your consideration.

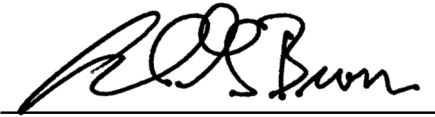
Sincerely,



Donald Norcross
Member of Congress



Elizabeth Warren
United States Senator



Anthony G. Brown
Member of Congress



John Garamendi
Member of Congress



Andy Kim
Member of Congress



Sylvia R. Garcia
Member of Congress



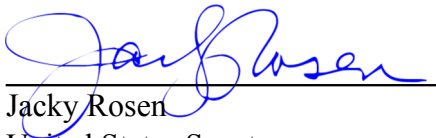
Seth Moulton
Member of Congress



Mikie Sherrill
Member of Congress



Kirsten Gillibrand
United States Senator



Jacky Rosen
United States Senator



Mazie K. Hirono
United States Senator