



# PARENTS DEFENDING EDUCATION ACTION

Chairman Roger Wicker  
Ranking Member Jack Reed  
U.S. Senate Committee on Armed Services  
Russell Senate Building - Room 228  
Washington, D.C., 20510

January 7, 2025

Dear Chairman Wicker and Ranking Member Reed,

Over the past four years we have seen a dangerous politicization of our Department of Defense. Rather than prioritizing a strong national defense, Biden administration officials chose to reorient the Department to push political propaganda on both military personnel and the children of service members through Department of Defense Education Activity (DoDEA) schools. Through this education system, federal bureaucrats inject gender and race ideologies into classrooms and promote divisive Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) concepts. It is an insult to the men and women in uniform – particularly to those families who are stationed abroad and have limited education options, and who depend on these schools to educate their children far from home.

The examples of content promoted in DoDEA classrooms should alarm parents and taxpayers alike. During a 2021 Department of Defense-sponsored 2021 “Equity and Access” conference, sessions included talks “promoting queer theory, anti-racism, global citizenship, and other activist priorities.”<sup>1</sup> At the same event, one of the speakers argued that “kids as young as four years old are starting to develop a stable understanding of gender identity, so elementary school is the perfect time” to push these topics on young children. Other examples of malfeasance include a DoDEA teacher who encouraged attendees to withhold gender information from parents, while another presenter suggested using a “Genderbread Person” lesson to help children “as young as pre-K how to identify themselves along four continuums of gender.”

DoDEA schools also employed a DEI official with a history of writing racist, anti-white social media posts who openly used her position to promote racially-charged opinions.<sup>2</sup> Following congressional action spearheaded by then-Chairwoman Elise Stefanik, this individual was removed from

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<sup>1</sup> Williams, R. P., & Yenor, S. (2022, October 5). Indoctrinating the military’s kids. <https://www.city-journal.org/article/indoctrinating-the-militarys-kids>

<sup>2</sup> Reilly, P. (2022, September 14). “woke” Department of Defense Equity chief Kelisa Wing has history of anti-white twitter posts: Report. New York Post. <https://nypost.com/2022/09/13/dod-equity-chief-kelisa-wing-has-history-of-ant-white-posts/>

her position – ostensibly so she would no longer be able to influence curriculum at DoDEA schools.<sup>3</sup> Unfortunately, it was recently exposed that rather than removing this employee from the payroll of the federal government, this individual was transferred to the Department of Education, where she continued to push DEI in schools – and was given a \$10,000 raise.<sup>4</sup>

We at Parents Defending Education Action (PDEA) urge the swift confirmation of Pete Hegseth to serve as the next Secretary of Defense. Mr. Hegseth has already committed to defeating DEI in our military, including in DoDEA's schools, and he has the right vision to rid these taxpayer-funded classrooms from sponsoring non-academic, contentious content. This rot in schools upon which military personnel rely must end – which we know from experience, as our organization proudly employs a number of staff who are either veterans themselves or members of military families.

Mr. Hegseth possesses the military experience required to lead the Pentagon and its more than three million service members and civilians who work at DoD. He is an Afghanistan and Iraq veteran who has served in the National Guard as an infantry officer and has been responsible for leading 40 troops into war.<sup>5</sup> He understands the intricacies of battle, both at the strategic and tactical level, and understands that to build a strong military we need to emphasize unity, strength, and effectiveness, while dismantling the DEI industry that has crushed the morale of America's troops and military families.

Mr. Hegseth has an opportunity to get our military back on track and we are optimistic that when confirmed he will carry out his commitment to get politics and division out of the Pentagon. PDEA is proud to offer our organization's support to advance his confirmation.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Michele Exner', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Michele Exner  
Director of Federal Affairs  
Parents Defending Education Action

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<sup>3</sup> ICYMI: Stefanik announces removal of woke officer from military children's schools. Congresswoman Elise Stefanik. (2023, March 23). <https://stefanik.house.gov/2023/3/icymi-stefanik-announces-removal-of-woke-officer-from-military-children-s-schools>

<sup>4</sup> Portnoy, J. (2024b, December 25). *Waste of the day: Divisive DEI chief gets raise instead of demotion*. RealClearInvestigations.

[https://www.realclearinvestigations.com/articles/2024/12/25/waste\\_of\\_the\\_day\\_divisive\\_dei\\_chief\\_gets\\_raise\\_in\\_stead\\_of\\_demotion\\_1080812.html](https://www.realclearinvestigations.com/articles/2024/12/25/waste_of_the_day_divisive_dei_chief_gets_raise_in_stead_of_demotion_1080812.html)

<sup>5</sup> Exner, G., & Hunt, J. (2024, November 15). *Op-ed: Jeremy Hunt and Garrett Exner: Pete Hegseth has the experience that matters*. Washington Reporter. <https://washingtonreporter.news/p/op-ed-jeremy-hunt-and-garrett-exner-pete-hegseth-has-the-experience-that-matters>