

March 27, 2026

The Honorable Sasha Pérez, Chair
Senate Education Committee
1021 O Street, Suite 6740
Sacramento, CA 95814
SEDN.committee@senate.ca.gov



Dear Chair Pérez:

On behalf of tens of thousands of constituents, allied organizations, and more than 2,000 churches across California, the California Family Council gladly **supports** SB 1188.

SB 1188 corrects a structural inequity in California education law. Families who choose homeschooling, private schooling, or independent study do so lawfully, often at considerable personal sacrifice. Yet under current law, their children are effectively excluded from Junior Reserve Officers' Training Corps programs, a federally supported pathway to character development, physical fitness, and leadership. There is no rational policy justification for denying these students access to a program funded in part by federal taxpayers, including their own parents.

The Supreme Court has long recognized that parents possess a fundamental liberty interest in directing the education of their children.¹ When the state conditions access to publicly available programs on abandoning that educational choice, it penalizes the exercise of a constitutional right. SB 1188 removes that penalty by requiring local educational agencies to offer equal JROTC participation opportunities regardless of a student's instructional setting, honoring both parental authority and equal protection principles.

JROTC is not a recruitment tool; federal law expressly prohibits its use as such.² It is a proven youth development program. The U.S. Army Cadet Command reports that JROTC cadets demonstrate higher graduation rates, stronger civic engagement, and reduced disciplinary incidents compared to non-participants.³ Homeschooled and private school students deserve equal access to these demonstrated benefits. Excluding them serves no educational or public policy interest.

California need not act without precedent. States including Texas and Florida have adopted policies permitting homeschool and private school students to participate in JROTC programs hosted by public schools, with no reported administrative or logistical breakdown.⁴ SB 1188 brings California into alignment with both federal law and sound interstate policy practice.

The Department of Defense has identified declining youth eligibility as a national security concern; fewer than 23% of young Americans currently meet basic enlistment standards.⁵ JROTC is among the most effective tools for expanding and strengthening that pipeline. Arbitrarily excluding a large and growing segment of California's student population from participation undermines both local opportunity and national readiness.

As Family Protection Ministries has observed, SB 1188 functions as a clean-up measure, bringing California statute into conformity with existing federal law governing JROTC access.⁶

The federal government holds a clear constitutional role in providing for national defense, and JROTC reflects that responsibility. California's current exclusion of non-public school students creates unnecessary inconsistency with federal policy that this bill appropriately resolves.

For these reasons, California Family Council is proud to **support** SB 1188 and respectfully urges a favorable vote in committee.

Respectfully,



Greg Burt
Vice President
California Family Council

References

¹ U.S. Supreme Court, *Pierce v. Society of Sisters*, 268 U.S. 510 (1925); *Meyer v. Nebraska*, 262 U.S. 390 (1923).

² 10 U.S.C. § 2031(a)(2) (prohibiting use of JROTC as a military recruitment program).

³ U.S. Army Cadet Command, JROTC Program Overview, U.S. Department of the Army.

⁴ California Family Council Legislative Research, SB 1188 Support Fact Sheet, March 20, 2026.

⁵ U.S. Department of Defense, "2022 Demographics Report: Profile of the Military Community," Office of the Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense.

⁶ Family Protection Ministries, "Our Statement on SB 1188: Maintaining Balance Between Access and Independence," March 26, 2026. <https://fpmca.org/sb1188-maintaining-balance-between-access-and-independence/>