

Minnesota schools could be eligible for Purple Star designation

By Jonathan Mohr



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Winifred LaPorte, 11, right, testifies alongside her older sister Genevieve, 12, before the House veterans committee March 11, in support of HF4451. Rep. Peggy Bennett is the sponsor. (Photo by Michele Jokinen)

One of the most difficult things for children of military service members can be moving from place to place and school to school.

Twelve-year-old Genevieve LaPorte told the House Veterans and Military Affairs Finance and Policy Committee Monday how difficult that can be. Her father has served in the Army her entire life and she has had to move to a new state three times, always in the middle of a school year.

“Sometimes it is difficult for my teachers to understand my struggles,” she said. “Having extra support for these issues would be so helpful for many military kids who deal with the same thing that I do.”

Since 2017, nearly 40 states have established a Purple Star Schools program meant to make those moves less difficult for kids and their parents. The committee approved [HF4451](#) that, [as amended](#), would add Minnesota to that list. It now heads to the House Education Policy Committee.

Sponsored by [Rep. Peggy Bennett](#) (R-Albert Lea), the bill would require the Department of Education to develop a process for schools to seek a Purple Star School designation by July 1, 2026, and begin awarding them starting in the 2026-27 school year.

Bennett said the average military-connected child will attend six to nine schools during their K-12 education, which presents academic, social and emotional challenges.

“That’s hugely stressful,” Bennett said. “Stressful on the family, stressful on the kids and stressful when they go to school.”

Schools would have to fulfill a number of requirements to be designated as a Purple Star School, including:

- having a designated staff member serve as a military liaison who does things such as identify and serve as the point of contact for military-connected students at the school, along with determining appropriate school services and coordinating school programs for them;
- maintaining easily accessible information on the school website with relocation, academic, counseling and support information for the students and their families; and
- offering a transition program led by students, where appropriate, to help military-connected students transition into the school.

Designated schools would need to offer professional development opportunities for staff members on issues related to military-connected students and adopt a resolution showing support for military-connected students and their families or partner with local military installations to provide opportunities for volunteer work, field trips or speakers.

Bennett does not believe the bill would cost any money but has requested a fiscal note just to be certain.