



Representative John Kline  
Chairman, House Education and the Workforce Committee  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515

June 15, 2013

Dear Representative Kline,

On behalf of AASA, the national school superintendents association representing more than 10,000 school system leaders across the nation, I am writing to express our support for reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA). We thank you and your committee for your recent efforts in introducing the Student Success Act (SSA) as a proposal for reauthorization. AASA remains committed to working with you and your committee to complete the critical work of reauthorization.

AASA opposed No Child Left Behind since the legislation was introduced, citing the law's federal overreach, punitive measures, assumption that federal government knows best what local schools need, and unworkable mandates and requirements. More than a decade of NCLB implementation has demonstrated the problems AASA predicted, and has highlighted how current law relies on ineffective, costly requirements rather than supporting and trusting public school leaders to improve student outcomes. Congress must address the shortcomings of current law. SSA represents a legislative proposal that addresses many of these shortcomings and bolsters teaching and learning, rather than undermine it.

AASA recognizes your efforts and the efforts of the House Education and the Workforce Committee to reauthorize ESEA. AASA strongly believes that reauthorization is crucial to providing the nation's schools with relief from current law, which is both broken and lacking in the flexibility states and local school districts need to support student learning and achievement.

AASA believes that SSA represents a common-sense approach to federal policy, in large part because it balances the proper role of the federal government in education. SSA makes significant improvements in the federal role in accountability, standards and assessments that AASA supports. These improvements include:

- Maintain student disaggregation by subgroup
- Eliminate the utopian 100 percent proficiency
- Eliminate SES/Choice
- Return ownership of the accountability system to the state/local level
- Maintain school improvement for low performing schools, under state direction
- Maintain the requirement for annual assessment under state direction
- Require that assessments measure proficiency and growth models
- Remove caps on alternate assessments, allowing the IEP team to ensure that children are assessed in a meaningful, fair and accurate manner
- Maintain current law related to comparability calculations
- Maintain supplement/supplant language
- Reduce federal overreach into school improvement/turnaround strategies
- Put states in charge of designing a teacher evaluation system

- Include student performance in teacher evaluation
- Require multiple measures for teacher evaluation
- Provide for funding flexibility between certain programs within Title I
- Eliminate requirements related to Highly Qualified Teacher provisions
- Provide that 21<sup>st</sup> Century funds to school districts to be used for expanded learning time.
- Provide option for 5-, 6-, and 7-year graduation rates.

For all that SSA gets 'right', there are elements of the bill that give AASA pause, and we welcome the opportunity to work with you and your committee to make these improvements:

- Maintenance of Effort: AASA supports current maintenance of effort language to ensure continuity of state and local efforts. We support maintaining a lever to maintain state and local spending. The current MOE provisions provide the greatest protection to those low-wealth districts that generally educate more low-income children. Low-wealth districts generally get the greatest share of their funding from the state and if states are allowed to cut funding the most vulnerable districts and the most vulnerable children will be hurt disproportionately. Eliminating maintenance of effort language completely could compound fiscal pressures at the local level as LEAs would have to cover state reductions with local dollars. MOE provisions do need to be modified, however, because under current MOE local school districts are held responsible for state reductions in spending and forced to make up state reductions. MOE should not force local school districts, particularly low-wealth districts, to compensate for reductions in state effort.
- Funding: AASA is concerned by the proposal's authorization levels. The total amount authorized for ALL ESEA programs under the proposal is lower than just the authorized amount for Title I for the last year it was authorized under current law. While the bill includes increased flexibility for state and local education agencies (and flexibility can be as good as new money!), AASA is concerned that these authorization levels limit the ability of Congress to invest in public education. AASA encourages the committee to return to the 'such sums' language.
- Charter Schools: AASA supports public school choice and charter schools that operate under the governance of local public school boards. We believe charter and traditional public schools should face the same environmental, labor, due process and fiscal laws, which is neither clear nor directed in the current ESEA proposal.
- Equitable Participation: The House provisions regarding services to eligible students in private schools have been made more costly, cumbersome and bureaucratic, which will cut into services without improving student outcomes and strain relations between public and private school leaders.
- Education Technology: AASA is concerned by the disconnect between a federal focus on requiring schools to prepare students to be college- and career-ready in the 21<sup>st</sup> century but then failing to recognize the importance of continued support for education technology and the related professional development. AASA urges the committee to incorporate a dedicated education technology program into its bill.

AASA urges Congress to move forward with the very critical work of reauthorizing ESEA and providing all of the nation's schools with workable federal education policy that strikes the appropriate balance between federal government authority and state and local autonomy. As your committee moves forward with the important work of reauthorization, we remain optimistic that any proposal coming out of your Committee and to the full House floor will garner bipartisan support. We look forward to seeing this bill reported out of committee and to working with you to complete ESEA reauthorization in the 113<sup>th</sup> Congress.

Sincerely



Noelle M. Ellerson

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