



FIRST FOCUS

CAMPAIGN FOR CHILDREN

February 2, 2015

The Honorable Lamar Alexander
Chairman
Committee on Health, Education, Labor and Pensions
United States Senate

The Honorable Patty Murray
Ranking Member
Committee on Health, Education, Labor and Pensions
United States Senate

Dear Senator Alexander and Senator Murray,

On behalf of First Focus Campaign for Children (FFCC), thank you for the opportunity to comment on the draft bill to reauthorize the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA). FFCC is a national bipartisan organization that advocates directly for legislative change in Congress to ensure children and families are the priority in federal policy and budget decisions. As an organization that works on the broad range of federal and state policy that impacts children, FFCC is particularly aware of the unique needs of student populations that have traditionally been underserved by the public education system.

As you know, the future strength of the nation's democracy and its economy is dependent upon the investments made in children and youth today. The reauthorization of ESEA presents an historic opportunity to positively impact the lives of millions of children and families. In the interest of that, we offer comments and recommended changes to the draft reauthorization bill to ensure that federal investments in children and youth will actively improve academic outcomes and contribute to the future success of the country.

Authorized Funding Levels Insufficient to Ensure Equity and Academic Achievement

Authorizing funding levels sends a message to appropriators about what funding level is adequate for a given initiative. Authorizing total funding levels \$120 billion below the FY 2015 level for every year from FY 2016 to FY 2021 does not reflect need in state educational agencies (SEAs) and local educational agencies (LEAs). Additionally, consolidating all funding streams in Title IV would mean children are unable to access the full range of supports necessary to succeed.

Appropriations in FY 2015 for education are below FY 2008 funding, despite growing need for federal investment in education. Most states are still not funding per-pupil education at pre-recession levels,¹ meaning too many children are losing the core resources necessary for an excellent education. For example, already 20 percent of high schools do not have school counselors² while between 10 and 25 percent of high schools do not offer a full sequence of math and science education (e.g. Algebra I and II, geometry, biology, and chemistry).³

This lack of resources is not for lack of need; the number of homeless students enrolled in school been growing consistently for years⁴ yet the federal government provides LEAs only \$50 per homeless student for support

services,⁵ and for the first time more than 50 percent of students live below 185 percent of the federal poverty line.⁶ Children living in poverty and homeless children face multiple significant barriers to a successful education, resulting in chronic absences, repeated grades, and high dropout rates for these students; low-income students are five times more likely to drop out of school than their middle class peers,⁷ while homeless students are four times more likely to drop out.⁸ Every student who drops out of school comes at significant cost to the country from lost tax revenue and decreased economic output. For example, one study found that the students who dropped out of the high school class of 2011 lost about \$154 billion in additional income over the course of their lives.⁹

Schools can be a source of support and help children overcome these challenges by providing stability and important resources for children who face such challenges, such as guidance counselors and health clinics, but not without sufficient funding. The appropriate response to growing demand is to assist schools that are already under-resourced to better meet the needs of their students, and to ensure that children have access to the diverse range of supports they need to succeed.

Recommendation:

- Authorized funding levels should reflect student need and ESEA should signal a desire to increase investments in children to benefit the country's future economy.
- Title IV should not be consolidated into a block grant for states, and Title II and IV funding should not be transferable.

Portability of Funds Undermines Original Intent of Title I

The original Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 was a supports-oriented civil rights bill intended to close academic achievement gaps and ensure that every child has equal opportunity to succeed. Title I, Part A was that principle codified in policy, with formula grants to help LEAs with high concentrations of poverty to meet the unique needs of children living in poverty and make up for lower state and local education funding as a result of being located in an area of high poverty. Though never fully funded, by allowing LEAs to direct Title I funds to schools that need it most, Title I has had a positive impact on schools and their students.

Still, funding inequities persist, with serious implications for students. New research reveals the importance of funding for student outcomes; a 10 percent increase in per-pupil spending per year for all twelve years of a child's education increases educational attainment and adult wages and decreases the likelihood of living in poverty as an adult, with a greater impact for children from low-income families.¹⁰ Money matters because it pays for educational resources for students, resources of particular importance for students who face challenges outside the classroom like poverty or homelessness.

Instead of weakening Title I, Part A and taking away the ability of LEAs to make local decisions about how to use those funds, Title I, Part A should be strengthened to better improve equity. While portability would, in theory, allow parents to make more decisions about where their children go to school, in practice that is not the case. In a high-choice system, students must enter lotteries for the best schools and children are often unable to get into many of the best schools. With portability provisions a student who would like to leave a high-poverty school for a low-poverty school with better resources but is locked out of the low-poverty school must attend their original high-

poverty school, which will be worse off as it loses even more funding from students leaving, making it less able to meet the needs of the remaining students. Additionally, research finds that, when given the decision, parents often value proximity to home, afterschool or extended learning time, and extracurricular activities over academics, and that a choice-based system does not promote equity.¹¹

Parents shouldn't have to risk school lotteries to have a good school close to home, and a fully funded, more equitable Title I, Part A that improves schools that need it most would help ensure that every student has access to an excellent education. Furthermore, recommendations below regarding school-community partnerships and integrated student services would increase availability of those characteristics that parents value and that help students succeed, such as afterschool time and other extracurricular activities.

Recommendations:

- Remove portability provisions from Title I.
- Strengthen maintenance of effort and supplement, not supplant provisions throughout the bill to ensure that states maintain their current investments in education and that federal money is used as an additional source of funding, not to replace state and local education funding.

Promoting a Comprehensive Approach to Education Through School-Community Partnerships

Across the country, results demonstrate that when schools offer comprehensive, integrated student supports, student achievement improves. Last year, Child Trends conducted a rigorous review of research findings on integrated student supports and found that using integrated student supports: decreases grade retention and the likelihood of dropping out; increases attendance, math achievement, and overall GPA; is firmly grounded in child and youth development by recognizing the importance of whole child education; takes into account more of the factors that contribute to student success than other approaches; and produces a positive return on investment.¹²

Reauthorization of ESEA should promote a shared, systemic, and comprehensive approach to education through integrating services and engaging families and communities. This collaborative framework will build community ownership for change and improve academic results for children and youth.

A strong coalition including AASA, AFT, the Coalition for Community Schools, FFCC, NEA, CCS, PTA, United Way and YMCA has developed legislation (the DIPLOMA Act, S.2849 in the 113th Congress) that will meet the comprehensive needs of students as outlined above. The legislation helps communities meet the challenges influencing student achievement, including factors in and outside of school. States would receive funds by formula, do a needs-assessment and provide grants to local consortia consisting of school districts, community-based organizations, local businesses, institutions of higher education, local government, service providers, students, parents, and others. These consortia would engage families and the community in strengthening student achievement, coordinating existing services, and filling gaps in services ranging from tutoring and extended learning to health care and social supports. An independent evaluation would be conducted to measure results and identify best practices. Provisions from this bill should be inserted in the draft ESEA reauthorization.

The draft bill includes important language that allows schools to begin implementing this model, but only for targeted assistance schools. The language for targeted assistance schools in Section 1113 regarding a needs

assessment and comprehensive services is a great start for school-community partnerships to increase access to integrated student services, this language can be expanded and included in other parts of the draft bill to make this model more accessible for additional schools.

Recommendations:

- Preserve the 21st Century Community Learning Center program as a dedicated funding stream for summer and before and after school time activities.
- Section 4107 (a)(2) currently prevents funding for Title IV, Safe and Healthy Students, to be used to provide medical services, but a number of schools across the country already offer these services. This restriction is overly burdensome and could put children's health at risk. Additionally, in some schools the school-based health clinic provides healthcare for students' parents as well as the students, which can improve the likelihood of students receiving care from the health center. The federal government should in no way restrict the provision of health care through school-based health clinics.
- Section 1113 (d)(3)(A)(i)(I) should be changed to allow children who are entitled to a free public education according to state laws, instead of youth under age 21 who are entitled to a free public education. Some states allow free public education to youth over age 21 in an effort to recover dropouts, often with great success (see, for example, the College, Career, and Technology Academy in the Rio Grande Valley, Texas).¹³ Restricting funds under this section would unnecessarily burden states with different laws regarding free public education.
- Section 1113, subsection (d) Targeted Assistance School Programs includes a needs assessment, and should also include an assets assessment to allow schools to partner with already existing services in the community.
- Section 1111, (b)(3), State Plans should include a collaborative and comprehensive results framework that identifies and reports on results beyond academic achievement, and include indicators for health and wellness, discipline, attendance, and family engagement. This framework should include research-based annual goals and aligned quantifiable indicators to document continuous improvement. The goals should include:
 - Children are ready for school.
 - Students are engaged and achieving in school.
 - Students are physically, mentally, socially, and emotionally healthy.
 - Schools and neighborhoods are safe and provide a positive climate for learning.
 - Families and communities are supportive and engaged in their children's education as equal partners.
 - Graduates are ready for postsecondary education and 21st-century careers.
 - Students are contributing to their communities.
 - Students are not chronically absent.

These indicators are similar to those that were included in the Elementary and Secondary Education Reauthorization Act of 2011, which was reported favorably from the HELP committee with a 15-7 vote. It included data on indicators outside of just academic achievement, including physical and mental health indicators, and comprehensive plans to meet the needs of LEAs.

Furthermore, the state strategy should include a description of the state's plan to meet the goals described, including a description of how funds are coordinated and integrated with other state, local and federal funds

to achieve the goals, how the state will identify and eliminate barriers to coordination and integration of programs, initiatives and funding streams to achieve the goals, and a description of the state's plan to increase community and family engagement in education. States should also conduct an assets and needs assessment to determine the needs of students and the assets within the state that can be mobilized, coordinated, and integrated to achieve the state's goals.

- Section 1111, (d)(1), State Report Card should include reporting on the status and progress on key indicators beyond academic achievement, including health and wellness, discipline, attendance, and family engagement.
- Section 1111, (d)(2), LEA Report Cards should include the LEA's status and progress toward the indicators above.
- Section 1112, LEA Plans should include how LEAs plan to coordinate, enhance, and integrate existing services available at the school and through local businesses, community based organizations, institutions of higher education, and other potential partners. The DIPLOMA Act also includes a list of allowable use of funds regarding how partnerships can be used to improve student outcomes. The list is available upon request.
- Section 1111, (d)(6), Report to Congress should include information on the collective progress made by states in achieving the goals established above.

Strengthening Educational Opportunities for Children and Youth in Unstable Housing

Research shows that homeless children and children in foster care are more likely to suffer from health and mental health issues, developmental problems, and are more likely to perform poorly in school than other children and youth living in stable housing. A study from the Government Accounting Office found that third-graders who have changed schools frequently are more than twice as likely to repeat a grade as their permanently housed peers.¹⁴ Others have found that high mobility can reduce the chances of high school graduation by more than 50 percent.¹⁵ And, though homelessness for other populations has been declining, the number of homeless students enrolled in pre-K-12 schools has been growing, increasing 8 percent between 2011-2012 and 2012-2013 to 1.3 million students.¹⁶

Lack of funding to meet the unparalleled increase in homeless children and youth has undermined the law's effectiveness and lead to under-identification of homeless students, increased school mobility, and gaps in enrollment. Lowering the authorized funding level, despite the tremendous increase in child and youth homelessness, weakens the ability of schools to respond to some of their most vulnerable students. The other changes the draft bill makes, while beneficial to the program and the children and youth it serves, do not address many of the largest and most persistent challenges consistently cited by homeless liaisons, State Coordinators, other educators, service providers, parents, and young people.

Students in foster care face many similar issues as homeless students, and should be afforded with the same rights and educational opportunities that homeless children have in a system that is tailored to the unique needs faced by children in foster care. ESEA should ensure that child welfare agencies have the full cooperation of state and local education agencies by placing requirements on state and local education agencies that both mirror and extend beyond those placed on child welfare agencies.

Recommendations: We remain supportive of provisions adopted by the U.S. House of Representatives in H.R. 5 in 2013, and the bipartisan Senate bill from 2011, including:

- Ensuring that homeless liaisons have time and training to carry out their responsibilities
- Ensuring that homeless liaisons participate in professional development offered by the State
- Enhancing the school stability provisions of the law to ensure that students can stay in their same school when it is in their best interest
- Improving access to pre-school programs administered by SEAs or LEAs for young homeless children
- Requiring that the amount of funds reserved for homeless students under Title I Part A be based on a needs assessments, and clarify that funds can be used in all schools in a school district, as well as for transportation and liaisons
- Providing additional assistance to unaccompanied youth by ensuring they are able to receive credit for work completed satisfactorily in another LEA, and that liaisons assist them with the FAFSA.
- Requiring that States conduct monitoring of, and provide technical assistance to, all LEAs
- Allowing homeless children and youth transitioning from feeder schools to remain in their school district of origin, if it is in their best interest
- Requiring school districts to adopt policies and practices to promote school success, including access to full participation in the academic and extra-curricular activities that are made available to non-homeless students
- Raising the authorized funding level for the McKinney-Vento Act to a minimum of \$150 million so that more LEAs are able to receive subgrants to identify and support homeless children and youth

Additionally, we recommend a parallel program with a dedicated funding stream for children and youth in foster care:

- Requires state and local education agencies to collaborate with child welfare agencies to keep foster children in their current schools after they move to new school districts.
- When it is not in the best interest of particular foster children to remain in their current schools, require state and local education agencies to collaborate with child welfare agencies to enroll those children immediately in new schools.
- Forbid states from segregating foster children by forcing them to attend separate, often inferior schools, such as schools at group foster homes, unless it is documented that particular foster children have disabilities that must be addressed in alternative educational settings under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA).

Resource Equity

Paramount among the reasons for ongoing, stubborn gaps in educational achievement is lack of resource equity for each and every student. The Equity and Excellence Commission, a diverse group of education experts created by Congress to provide advice to the Secretary of Education on the disparities in meaningful educational opportunities that give rise to the achievement gap, found that inequitable school finance systems mean that a child's opportunities are often a function of their zip code. Indeed, the most recent Civil Rights Data Collection, revealed stunning gaps in access to the basic components that lead to academic achievement for students. For example, 20 percent of high

school students attend a school with no school counselor while between 10 and 25 percent of high schools do not offer more than one of the core courses in math and science.¹⁷ Additionally, students of color and English language learners attend schools with higher proportions of inexperienced teachers than their white and native English-speaking peers. To make matters worse, federal accountability systems require all schools and students to reach the same achievement levels despite unequal access to essential resources for educational excellence.

The Equity and Excellence Commission recommends that the federal government support states and districts in determining the cost of providing a meaningful educational opportunities and high achievement and implement a system that will make those meaningful educational opportunities and high achievement to each and every student.¹⁸ Changing federal accountability standards in ESEA to include those resources that every child needs to succeed in school, such as specialized support teams, appropriate class sizes, up-to-date class materials, and support staff such as school counselors, would be a major step toward ensuring equity. By recognizing the ingredients necessary for an excellent education, ESEA would encourage and allow states to address the core issues facing too many students of color, students with disabilities, English language learners, and students from low-income families. Closing the access gap to essential resources will help close academic achievement gaps.

Recommendations:

- Section 1111 (b)(3), State Accountability System, should include resource equity as one of the minimum requirements of state accountability plans, and include a list of the core resources for education (available on request).
- Section 1111 (d)(1)(C), Minimum Requirements for Annual State Report Cards, should include reporting on resource equity within school districts and states to increase transparency so parents and families can better advocate to improve their children's education.

Expanding High Quality Early Learning Opportunities

The pipeline to high school and college completion, gainful employment, and successful adulthood begins at birth; the earlier we invest in our children's education, the greater return we will see on that investment. Research has shown that children from low-income families who participate in high-quality early learning are more successful in elementary school, more likely to graduate from high school and less likely to commit a delinquent offense or crime than children who did not have access to these crucial early experiences.¹⁹ These programs are also very cost effective; the return on investment of one dollar in high quality early learning program is seven to ten dollars in averted costs related to special education, health care, welfare, and crime.²⁰

The reauthorization of ESEA provides a unique opportunity to transform the American education system and scaffold the graduation pipeline from the early years through the elementary, middle, and high school years. First Focus has identified three early learning priority areas for the reauthorization of ESEA:

Improving the early years of the education continuum – beginning with pre-kindergarten and continuing through third grade – is essential to ensuring that every child is college and career ready. Research shows that high-quality classroom experiences throughout this period of a child's life can lead to significant gains in achievement.²¹ Research also shows that a child who is still struggling to read by the third grade may never catch up.²² Current policies do not

do enough to address this problem. For example, only one-third of fourth graders in this country are reading proficiently.²³ Education policies at the federal level should help districts improve and expand pre-k for 3- and 4-year-olds, expand full-day kindergarten for 5-year-olds, and improve instruction and alignment in the early grades.

Recommendations:

- Section 1111(b)(1), Challenging State Academic Standards, should include early learning guidelines and early grade standards that include all domains of development for infants, toddlers, preschoolers, and children in kindergarten through third grade. These standards will assist in the transition to kindergarten and ensure that the early grades are appropriately aligned with child development.
- Testing provisions in Title I should include an requirement that tests for children in grades pre-K through 2nd grade are age-appropriate assessments and that these assessments do not provide or lead to sanctions for individual children, teachers, early childhood education programs, or schools. Instead, they are used only to improve instruction or classroom environment, target high-quality professional development, determine the need for health, mental health, disability or family support services, program improvement, or research.
- Title IV should include additional funding dedicated to early childhood education programs, including expansion and improvement of state pre-K programs and full-day kindergarten.

Improving Teacher Training and Professional Development

Reauthorization of ESEA is an opportunity to improve recruitment, training, and professional development of teachers to ensure that every child has a well-prepared, qualified, and effective teacher. Research reveals that the best way to do this is by improving teacher recruitment, preparation, professional growth, and leadership opportunities. The Equal Access to Quality Education Act, introduced in the 113th Congress in the House as H.R.2902, would improve recruitment and preparation through partnerships between institutions of higher education and school districts, residencies in high-need schools, and providing a pipeline of teachers for high-need schools. It also supports teachers through professional development and teacher retention strategies, including mentorship, new-teacher supports, and leadership opportunities. Further, the legislation improves the diversity of the teacher workforce to better reflect the student population. Nationwide, over half of K-12 students are students of color,²⁴ but over 80 percent of teachers are white.²⁵ This is a significant barrier to successful education because research reveals that students of color experience improvements to academic achievement when taught by teachers of color.²⁶ To ensure that the teacher and student populations are more similar, the bill prioritizes Historically Black Colleges and Universities, Hispanic-Serving Institutions, and Asian-American and Native American Pacific Islander-serving Institutions.

Recommendations:

- Title II should be a separate funding stream for teacher and school leader professional development to ensure that this important function of
- Title II should also include provisions from the Equal Access to Quality Education Act to help states and districts improve induction programs, expand teacher residency experiences, increase the diversity of the teacher workforce, and include pathways to leadership and career ladders for teachers and school leaders.

Reduce the Burden of Standardized Tests on Students

Since the passage of No Child Left Behind in 2001, an overemphasis on standardized testing has emerged. Intended as a way to measure academic achievement gaps between student subgroups (such as students of color and students from low-income families) and ensure that schools are improving, achievement on standardized tests has become the primary focus of SEAs, LEAs, schools, and teachers, all of which are burdened with harsh accountability measures tied to these tests. But measuring achievement gaps does not close them. In fact, measuring achievement gaps with standardized tests often only measures differences of opportunity for students, and an overreliance on standardized tests is a distraction or, at worst, a detriment to the more important goal of creating equal opportunity to high-quality education for every student.

Evidence shows that NCLB has been unsuccessful in closing racial achievement gaps; achievement gaps between white and black students and between white and Hispanic students have been closing slowly since 1990, well before the passage and implementation of NCLB, and “despite its intentions, there is no evidence that NCLB-style accountability has led to any substantial narrowing of achievement gaps.”²⁷ Despite the insignificant impact on academic achievement, test taking and test preparation take up a significant amount of student’s classroom time that could be otherwise spent on instruction.²⁸

In addition to the high stress students experience with high-stakes testing, this can add up to a substantial loss of classroom learning time and contributes to another negative result of over-emphasis on standardized tests: narrowed curriculum that increases instructional time spent on subjects that are tested to the exclusion of subjects and activities that are not, such as foreign languages and the arts, and teachers “teaching to the test.”²⁹ For example, five years into implementation of NCLB, researchers found that 62 percent of LEAs increased the amount of time spent on language arts (one of the tested subjects) by an average of 47 percent and math (the other tested subject) by an average of 37 percent in elementary schools. In districts with at least one school needing improvement, 75 percent of LEAs increased the amount of time spent on tested subjects.³⁰

In addition to the time diverted to preparing for and taking tests and the narrowing of the curriculum, standardized tests cost states about \$1.7 billion per year.³¹ At a time when thirty-five states are still spending less per pupil than before the recession,³² this \$1.7 billion per year could be better spent on student supports, tests that better measure student knowledge and critical thinking, recruiting more qualified teachers, or improving instruction.

A number of factors outside the classroom impact standardized test scores and educational opportunity,³³ but measuring the impact of those factors using standardized tests does not help students overcome challenges to education.

Recommendations:

- Section 1111(b)(2), the federal requirement of exams in every grade from 3 through 8 should be repealed, standardized tests should not be linked to harsh accountability measures, and language should be included for states and school districts to reduce the burden of testing on their students and offer fewer, but higher quality, exams.
- The National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) should be expanded so results are available more frequently and to ensure validity and reliability, but the core structure of NAEP (using representative samples with no harsh accountability measures) should be preserved.

Charter School Accountability

Use of charter schools has been growing across the country with mixed results for students and government funding. While some charter schools offer students opportunities not readily available otherwise, others do not raise student achievement. A number of charter schools also have policies designed to exclude or push out certain students and questionable finances that sometimes amount to waste, fraud, and abuse of federal, state, and local taxpayer funds. For example, one report found over \$100 million in losses for taxpayers as a result of questionable financial practices and lack of transparency by charter schools and charter school operators.³⁴

Charter schools sometimes have barriers to entry that traditional public schools do not have, which can discourage parents from enrolling their children or discourage students from applying, ultimately resulting in certain students being left out entirely. For example, some charter schools require lengthy essays from students and parents, do not offer applications in any language other than English, conduct mandatory family interviews, require family volunteer time, or require disclosure of disabilities or special needs (which is illegal on college applications).³⁵ Even requiring a social security number can create a chilling factor for undocumented immigrants, who are guaranteed a right to public education as a result the 1982 Supreme Court Decision *Plyler v. Doe*. These requirements for application, which traditional public schools do not have, create unnecessary challenges for many students and can result in blocking some students who would benefit from attending a high-quality charter school. Additionally, a number of states have laws that allow charter schools to screen applicants based on academic performance. This also blocks entrance into high-quality charter schools for students who could benefit from them. Because charter schools are funded at least partially with public money, they should not be allowed to exclude students.

Charter school discipline policies can also force students out.³⁶ Being pushed out of a charter school can have significant negative impact on student learning. Changing schools in the middle of a school year impacts academic achievement and social emotional development. While moving schools is sometimes unavoidable, policies should encourage students to remain at the same school whenever possible. Indeed, other federal policy recognizes the importance of remaining in the same school. For example, the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act (42 USC 119) stipulates that LEAs should keep homeless students in their school of origin even if they move outside the district, and LEAs should provide transportation to the school of origin. Charter schools should not be excepted from the expectation to keep students in their school of origin if it is in the best interest of the child.

Not all charter schools offer free or reduced price school meals,³⁷ a program for which 50 percent of K-12 students are eligible. A low-income family should never have to decide between sending their children to a school that provides free or reduced price meals for their children and a school that does not provide these meals. Because charter schools are public schools, they should also offer free or reduced price school meals for their students.

Recommendations:

- Title V (f)(1)(A) State Applications, Description of Program should include:
 - How states will ensure that charter school finances are transparent
 - Strong conflict of interest guidelines for charter school operators and funders
 - How states will not allow charter schools to screen applicants based on academic performance or other student characteristics, such as race, ethnicity, and ELL or disability status.

- How states will require charter schools to request from applicants only the information necessary to enroll in public school, with exceptions for homeless students (as public schools have).
 - Reporting on the percentage and number of students who leave charter schools and the reason for leaving, student recruitment policies, student retention data, and enrollment data.
 - Development of an accessible website with the information collected above for families who are deciding where their children should attend school.
 - How states will require charter schools to offer free or reduced price school meals.
- Title V should also include a set-aside so states have the capacity to adequately oversee charter schools and the Secretary of Education should be given the authority to enforce the requirements in this title.

ESEA Reauthorization should Focus on Improving Educational Equity for Each and Every Child

We urge you to update, strengthen and fully fund ESEA and hope that this input is valuable at this early stage of the reauthorization process. As you know, the long-term viability of our economy is dependent upon the education we provide our children and youth. We urge you to make significant improvements to current law for the benefit of millions of children and families across the country.

Sincerely,



Bruce Lesley
President

¹ Michael Leachman and Chris Mai (2014) “Most States Funding Schools Less than Before the Recession,” Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, available: <http://www.cbpp.org/cms/?fa=view&id=4011>.

² Civil Rights Data Collection (2014) “Data Snapshot: Teacher Equity,” U.S. Department of Education Office for Civil Rights, available: <http://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ocr/docs/crdc-teacher-equity-snapshot.pdf>.

³ Civil Rights Data Collection (2014) “Data Snapshot: College and Career Readiness,” U.S. Department of Education Office for Civil Rights, available: <http://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ocr/docs/crdc-college-and-career-readiness-snapshot.pdf>.

⁴ National Center for Homeless Education (2014), “Education for Homeless Children and Youth,” Available: <http://center.serve.org/nche/downloads/data-comp-1011-1213.pdf>.

⁵ First Focus (2014), “Children’s Budget Book,” available: <http://firstfocus.org/resources/report/childrens-budget-2014/>.

⁶ Southern Education Foundation (2015), “A New Majority: Low Income Students Now a Majority in the Nation’s Public Schools,” available: <http://www.southerneducation.org/getattachment/5c53bd26-88c8-4ae2-b9ed-37a699956b1a/A-New-Majority-2015-Update-Low-Income-Students-Now.aspx>.

⁷ Chapman, C., Laird, J., Ifill, N., and KewalRamani, A. (2011). “Trends in High School Dropout and Completion Rates in the United States: 1972–2009 (NCES 2012-006).” U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics. Available: <http://nces.ed.gov/pubs2012/2012006.pdf>.

⁸ National Coalition for the Homeless (2009), “Education of Homeless Children and Youth,” available: <http://www.nationalhomeless.org/factsheets/education.html#footnotes>.

⁹ The Alliance for Excellent Education (2011), “The High Cost of High School Dropouts: What the Nation Pays for Inadequate High Schools,” available: <http://all4ed.org/reports-factsheets/the-high-cost-of-high-school-dropouts-what-the-nation-pays-for-inadequate-high-schools/>.

¹⁰ C. Kirabo Jackson, Rucker Johnson and Claudia Persico, “The Effects of School Spending on Educational and Economic Outcomes: Evidence from School Finance Reforms,” NBER Working Paper, available: <http://papers.nber.org/tmp/86699-w20847.pdf>.

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- ¹¹ Douglas Harris and Matthew Larsen (2015), "What Schools do Families Want (and Why)?" Education Research Alliance for New Orleans, available: <http://educationresearchalliancenaola.org/files/publications/ERA1402-Policy-Brief-What-Schools-Do-Families-Want-3.pdf>.
- ¹² Kristen Anderson Moore and Carol Emig (2014). "Integrated Student Supports: A Summary of the Evidence Base for Policymakers," Child Trends, available: <http://www.childtrends.org/issreport/>.
- ¹³ Lili Allen (2012), "Back on Track through College in the Rio Grande Valley," appears in *Big Ideas: Children in the Southwest*, First Focus, available: <http://firstfocus.org/resources/report/back-on-track-through-college-in-the-rio-grande-valley/>.
- ¹⁴ Government Accounting Office (1994). Elementary school children: Many change schools frequently, harming their education. GAO/HEHS-94-45. Washington, DC.
- ¹⁵ Rumberger, R. (2003). The causes and consequences of student mobility. *Journal of Negro Education*, 72, 6-21.
- ¹⁶ National Center for Homeless Education (2014).
- ¹⁷ See: Civil Rights Data Collection (2014) "Data Snapshot: Teacher Equity," and Civil Rights Data Collection (2014) "Data Snapshot: College and Career Readiness."
- ¹⁸ The Equity and Excellence Commission (2013), "For Each and Every Child: A strategy for education equity and excellence," available: <http://www2.ed.gov/about/bdscomm/list/eec/equity-excellence-commission-report.pdf>.
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