



July 13, 2015

Dear Senators Blumenthal and Murphy,

As representatives of a diverse coalition representing administrators, advocates, practitioners, and the business community in Connecticut, we are reaching out to you as the U.S. Senate begins floor debate on the Every Child Achieves Act. We would like to express our support for your leadership in the Senate's efforts to revise the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA). Additionally, we want to express our appreciation for the amendment that Senator Murphy has offered on the Every Child Achieves Act. This amendment will ensure that all kids matter by ensuring reporting on and accountability for the performance of all student subgroups and action to improve our lowest-performing schools.

Accountability is the backbone of ESEA. As you know, this landmark education law – long overdue for a rewrite – was enacted 50 years ago to protect the needs of America's most vulnerable children. It ensures their fundamental right to a high-quality public education, and equips our workforce with talented, skilled leaders.

The bi-partisan bill that is being considered by the Senate contains provides a generally thoughtful framework for reauthorizing ESEA. However, we believe that Senator Murphy's amendment will improve the bill because it requires states to identify and assure action to improve chronically low-performing schools and schools that consistently do not meet state-established goals for any subgroup of students. Additionally, this amendment would require clear timeframes for state action and support if district supports and interventions aren't working. Finally, Sen. Murphy's amendment gives flexibility to states when it comes to how they will address these issues within the parameters established by federal statute, thus avoiding a one-size-fits-all federal mandate. All three of these steps are critical to ensuring that schools, districts, and states are supported as they meet what they know is their obligation to act on behalf of our most vulnerable students who struggle academically. While members of our coalition may have additional concerns or support additional amendments to the current ESEA proposal, we join you in our support of this amendment.

Additionally, we urge you and your colleagues in the Senate to reject attempts allow parents to opt their children out of statewide annual assessments and to allow those students to not be counted as part of the required 95 percent participation rate. Such a move would undermine states' access to critical information on student progress towards college and career readiness, and could allow for disparities in outcomes if it allowed for the exclusion of certain children—especially low-income students, students of color, English learners and students with disabilities— from annual tests. Annual performance data on how well students, especially students who have been historically

underserved, is a critical component of efforts to ensure that every child gets a great public education. A move away from this data would set us back as a country and take us farther away from fulfilling what we believe to be a civil right: access to a great public education.

A quality education is a powerful tool for improving lives and keeping our country strong. While any reauthorization of ESEA should provide states and districts with greater flexibility, it should also maintain the law's original intent as consequential civil rights legislation.

Connecticut is extremely lucky to have your leadership in the United States Senate during this critical time for public education. We know that you will continue to fight to ensure all children have access to a public education that prepares them to meet the challenges of the future.

Best Regards,

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