



The Honorable Lamar Alexander  
 Chairman, Committee on Health, Education, Labor,  
 and Pensions  
 United States Senate  
 428 Senate Dirksen Office Building  
 Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Patty Murray  
 Ranking Member, Committee on Health,  
 Education, Labor, and Pensions  
 United States Senate  
 428 Dirksen Senate Office Building  
 Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable John Kline  
 Chairman, House Committee on Education and the  
 Workforce  
 United States House of Representatives  
 2176 Rayburn House Office Building  
 Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Bobby Scott  
 Ranking Member, House Committee on Education  
 and the Workforce  
 United States House of Representatives  
 2101 Rayburn House Office Building  
 Washington, DC 20515

November 3, 2015

Dear Chairman Alexander, Ranking Member Murray, Chairman Kline, and Ranking Member Scott:

We are writing to urge you to reach an agreement on reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) that ensures that all children have an opportunity to achieve college- and career-ready standards. There are good solid beginnings in both houses of Congress, but immediate action must be taken to ensure that this momentum is not lost and that schools see the changes they need.

Reauthorization is vital and time-sensitive. Right now, the U.S Department of Education (ED) is using a patchwork of methods – waivers, regulations, civil rights guidance – to make policy changes and in doing so is leaving stakeholders out of the decision-making process. In many cases, this approach not only provides relief to some (but not all) states and schools, it also requires burdensome and costly changes at the State level without providing States with any assurance that the guidance will still be valid next year, or even next month. This system is at best temporary when a change in administration comes at least every eight years, and it is certainly not sustainable. Our States, our parents, our schools, and our students need certainty and clear, consistent, and achievable goals.

A reauthorized ESEA must find a balance between State and local-level flexibility to make policy changes, choose assessments, and design accountability systems and federal accountability. Federal lawmakers and policy makers should be able to trust the judgment of those of us who work with these programs every day.

ESEA and its constant commitment to equity remains the federal program best positioned to level the playing field for students in poverty. When education is seen as the civil rights issue of this generation, it is critical that any ESEA reauthorization remain true to its focus on equity.

Schools and States also need time to adjust to a reauthorized law. Policy shifts, accountability changes, and other modifications need to be done with care and after consultation with stakeholders. Ensuring sufficient time for transition to a new law means that new policies will be thoughtfully and inclusively drafted.

It is critically important that you come together to put kids first and finish the work on ESEA reauthorization. We implore you to move forward in the spirit of compromise and send a sign-able bill to the President's desk. Our nation's schools and the students they serve deserve nothing less.

Sincerely,

AASA, The School Superintendents Association

ASCD

Association of Educational Service Agencies

Association of School Business Officials International

National Association of Federal Education Program Administrators

National Association of State Directors of Special Education

National Rural Education Advocacy Coalition

National Rural Education Association

National Title I Association