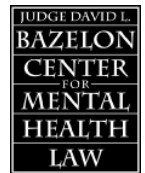


# Civil Rights Statement of Support for Robust and Meaningful Federal Regulation and Oversight in ESSA



March 4, 2016

The Honorable John B. King Jr.  
Acting Secretary  
U.S. Department of Education  
400 Maryland Avenue, SW  
Washington, D.C. 20202

Dear Acting Secretary King:

On behalf of The Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights and the 55 undersigned organizations, we write to urge the U.S. Department of Education to use its full authority to ensure that state and local implementation of the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) best serves girls and boys of color, English Learners, students with disabilities, Native American students, low-income students and those who are migrant, homeless, in foster care or returning from or placed in juvenile detention, or LGBTQ. We believe that the only way for states, districts, and schools to be in compliance and consistent with the law's intent is through robust and meaningful federal regulation and oversight.

The congressional intent of the original Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) was to recognize that the federal government has a vital role in protecting the civil rights and promoting educational opportunity for all students, especially our most vulnerable students. Prior reauthorizations have honored this intent and ESSA is no different.

This new law includes serious protections for vulnerable students, and creates important leverage for parents, communities, and advocates to continue their push for equity and accountability for all students. **ESSA is clear: The department has the authority and responsibility to issue regulations and guidance, and to provide guidance and technical assistance for the implementation of the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA).**

For today's students—especially students of color, students with disabilities, English Learners, Native students, low-income students and other vulnerable students—the challenges are different than they were more than 50 years ago, but the stakes are at least as high. **Given the long history of state and local decisions shortchanging vulnerable students, the department cannot shirk from its regulatory and enforcement responsibilities to ensure that the implementation of ESSA eliminates, not perpetuates, persistent inequities in our nation's public education system.**

Our organizations stand ready to work with you and your staff, states, districts, schools, parents, and communities to implement the ESSA so that all students have the educational opportunity to truly succeed. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact Nancy Zirkin, Leadership Conference executive vice president, at [zirkin@civilrights.org](mailto:zirkin@civilrights.org) or Liz King, Leadership Conference director of education policy, at [king@civilrights.org](mailto:king@civilrights.org).

Sincerely,

The Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights  
ACLU  
Alliance for Excellent Education  
American Association of University Women (AAUW)  
American-Arab Anti-Discrimination Committee (ADC)  
AUCD  
Children's Advocacy Institute  
Children's Defense Fund  
Children's Home Society of America

CLASP  
Coalition for Juvenile Justice  
Council of Parent Attorneys and Advocates  
Democrats for Education Reform  
Disability Rights Education & Defense Fund  
Easter Seals  
Education Law Center-PA  
The Education Trust  
First Focus Campaign for Children  
GLSEN  
Human Rights Campaign  
Human Rights Project for Girls  
Judge David L. Bazelon Center for Mental Health Law  
Juvenile Law Center  
Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights Under Law  
League of United Latin American Citizens  
MALDEF  
NAACP  
NAACP Legal Defense and Educational Fund, Inc.  
National Association for the Education of Homeless Children and Youth  
National Association of Councils on Developmental Disabilities  
National Association of Counsel for Children  
National Center for Housing and Child Welfare  
National Center for Learning Disabilities  
National Center for Special Education in Charter Schools  
National Center for Youth Law  
National Council of La Raza  
The National Crittenton Foundation  
National Disability Rights Network  
National Down Syndrome Congress  
National Indian Education Association  
National Law Center on Homelessness & Poverty  
National Urban League  
National Women's Law Center  
National Youth Advocate Program, Inc.  
New Leaders  
PolicyLink  
Poverty & Race Research Action Council  
Public Advocates  
SEARAC  
Southern Poverty Law Center  
TASH  
Teach For America  
Teach Plus  
TNTP  
True Colors Fund  
UNCF