



February 25, 2015

OPPOSE H.R. 5:
PROTECT THE NEEDS OF STUDENTS

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Anti-Defamation League
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Karen McGill Lawson

Dear Representative:

On behalf of The Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights and the 47 undersigned organizations, we urge you to oppose H.R. 5, the Student Success Act, introduced by Chairman Kline. H.R. 5 undermines important federal protection for our nation's students, particularly children of color; children living in poverty; children with disabilities; homeless, foster, and migrant children; children in the juvenile justice system; children still learning English; and Native children. This bill is not a much needed update to the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA). Rather, it is a rollback to a time when the needs of students in underserved communities were ignored.

The Leadership Conference believes that the Student Success Act undermines the core American value of equal opportunity in education embodied in *Brown v. Board of Education*. Specifically, as was the case with the previous version in the last Congress, the bill abandons accountability for the achievement and learning gains of subgroups of disadvantaged students, who for generations have been harmed by low academic expectations. The bill also eliminates goals and performance targets for academic achievement; removes parameters regarding the use of federal funds to help improve struggling schools; fails to address key disparities in opportunity such as access to high-quality college preparatory curricula; restricts the federal government from protecting disadvantaged students; and fails to advance the current movement toward college- and career-ready standards. It also rolls back resources at a time when schools, districts, and states need adequate resources to address the needs of students, particularly as we ratchet up the momentum toward college and career readiness for all students.

In addition, the new H.R. 5 adds the so-called "portability" concept, which would divert much needed funds from the highest poverty schools and districts, and would undermine critical targeting of limited Title I funds. As a whole, the bill would thrust us back to an earlier time when states could choose to ignore the needs of children of color, low-income students, ELLs, and students with disabilities. The results, for these groups of students and for our nation as a whole, were devastating then, and would be devastating now.

States can do better and the federal government should ensure they do so. Federal funding must be fairly distributed and must be attached to firm, ambitious, and unequivocal demands for improvements in achievement, high school graduation rates, and closing of achievement gaps. We know that states, school districts, and schools seek a new law. However, the Student Success Act guts hard-won gains in the effort to ensure that all *students* — especially those who need the most help — get a high-quality education.



We hope and believe that this is the beginning of a conversation and not the end. Although we cannot and will not support a bill that undermines the best interests of our students and our nation's future, we welcome the opportunity to build on the successes of and remedy the problems with ESEA. You will find attached to this letter Shared Civil Rights Principles for the Reauthorization of ESEA, signed by 30 diverse organizations. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact Liz King, Senior Policy Analyst and Director of Education Policy, at king@civilrights.org or 202-466-0087, or Nancy Zirkin at zirkin@civilrights.org or 202-466-3311. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

The Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights
The Advocacy Institute
American-Arab Anti-Discrimination Committee
American Association of People with Disabilities
American Association of University Women
American Civil Liberties Union
American Foundation for the Blind
Association of University Centers on Disabilities
Autism National Committee
Autistic Self Advocacy Network
Center for American Progress
Center for Law and Social Policy
Children's Defense Fund
Council of Parent Attorneys and Advocates
Democrats for Education Reform
Disability Rights Education and Defense Fund
Easter Seals
Education Law Center
Education Post
The Education Trust
Gay, Lesbian & Straight Education Network
Human Rights Campaign
The Bazelon Center for Mental Health Law
Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights Under Law
Leading Educators
League of United Latin American Citizens
Mexican American Legal Defense and Educational Fund
NAACP
NAACP Legal Defense and Educational Fund
National Center for Learning Disabilities
The National Council on Independent Living
National Council on Teacher Quality
The National Center on Time and Learning
National Congress of American Indians
National Council of La Raza
National Disability Rights Network
National Down Syndrome Congress
National Urban League



National Women's Law Center
Partners for Each and Every Child
Poverty & Race Research Action Council
Public Advocates Inc.
Southeast Asia Resource Action Center
Stand for Children
TASH
Teach Plus
TNTP
United Negro College Fund