



The Honorable John Kline
Chairman
House Committee on Education and the Workforce
US House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Kline:

On behalf of the nation's 95,000 elementary, middle, and high school principals, assistant principals and other school leaders, the National Association of Elementary School Principals (NAESP) and the National Association of Secondary School Principals (NASSP) thank you for moving forward with the reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA).

Principals support many provisions in H.R. 5, the Student Success Act of 2013, specifically the elimination of Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) and the 100% proficiency requirements, requiring disaggregation of subgroup data, and removal of the unworkable school turnaround models that are required under the School Improvement Grants (SIG) program and Race to the Top.

While the bill strengthens and improves several areas of current law as authorized by the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB), principals have many concerns with the bill as reported by the committee. Foremost, NAESP and NASSP are troubled by the lack of bipartisanship within the reauthorization process despite several areas of agreement in both parties on overarching and problematic areas of NCLB. Principals are counting on the 113th Congress to fully renew the outdated law, which continues to adversely impact schools through onerous sanctions and hinder principals' ability to provide the optimum conditions for teaching and learning in every school. While thirty-seven states are operating under the Administration's "ESEA flexibility" waiver plans that provide some level of regulatory relief from NCLB, there are schools in the remaining thirteen states that continue to unnecessarily face inappropriate labeling and corrective actions on schools and the over-reliance of standardized testing. Principals seek to refocus the law to help put in place state and local education systems that will provide robust, meaningful accountability together with sufficient supports for educators and schools to improve.

NAESP and NASSP are disappointed that the bill would authorize funding for Title I at \$16.6 billion for FY 2014-2019, which is the same amount appropriated by Congress for FY 2012. As the committee's own fact sheet notes, this amount is "lower than just the Title I authorization for the last year it was authorized" under NCLB in 2001. This is obviously unacceptable for the many schools serving low-income students that are eligible for Title I funds, including the middle and high schools that never receive such funding because of the high need in their feeder elementary schools.

School Leadership

While we appreciate the clarity in the bill to define “school leader,” NAESP and NASSP believe that the term “school leader” must be defined to include only principals and assistant principals, and not superintendents and other district leaders. This definition would better inform the complexity of the roles and responsibilities various educators have *inside* the school building. The Student Success Act inadvertently diminishes the role of the principal as an instructional leader in absence of clear direction that principals are unique and their role in fostering high-quality instruction and learning must be upheld.

Our organizations are also disappointed that H.R. 5 includes provisions from the GREAT Teachers and Principals Act (H.R. 2196) as an allowable use of funds at the state level. NAESP and NASSP oppose the GREAT Act and its intent to establish new principal preparation academies that usurp state-level authority over principal licensure and certification requirements, recruit principal candidates with little-to-no background in education or experience in a school or classroom, and provide minimal clinical experience and mentoring for new principals and assistant principals

Professional Development

The appropriate federal role in education is to promote equity and target resources to assist states and local districts, including programmatic resources to support educators. The emphasis on school-level outcomes and student achievement places the school leader at the center of all school reform efforts. Today’s principals and assistant principals are expected to be visionary leaders, instructional experts, building managers, assessment specialists, disciplinarians, community builders, and more. The impact of principals is second only to that of effective teachers in classrooms.

NAESP and NASSP strive to support the instructional leadership skills of the nation’s principals and other schools leaders. Professional development for principals has been largely overlooked by states and local districts. While we are pleased that states must provide training to school leaders on the statewide teacher evaluation systems, we are concerned that H.R. 5 does not require districts to use Title II funds for professional development for principals. We would support a provision that requires States to use 2-5% of Title II funds for this purpose. Many states are initiating pilot principal evaluation systems and will need significant assistance to ensure that these evaluation systems lead to improved leadership performance.

Principal Evaluation

NAESP and NASSP issued a report in September 2012 called Rethinking Principal Evaluation, which offers states and districts a framework for principal evaluation systems to reflect the complexity of the principalship, and measure the leadership competencies that are required for student and school success. Principals are concerned about the new evaluation systems being developed by states and districts that were a condition for receiving ESEA flexibility waivers, SIG program funds, as well as Race to the Top. Congress now has a responsibility to provide guidance to state and local efforts in ESEA in order to establish effective principal evaluation

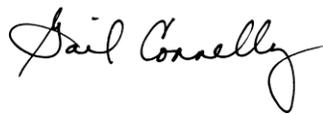
systems that will lead to improved performance of principals within the domains of effective school leadership, or the areas of their role in a school that are in their direct control.

Our organizations are concerned that the bill does not require the school leader evaluation systems in States to be based on more than just student test scores. We recommend that any principal evaluation focus on the six key domains of leadership responsibility within a principal's sphere of influence: student growth and achievement, school planning and progress, school culture, stakeholder support and engagement, professional qualities and practices, and professional growth and learning. The research contained in NAESP and NASSP's report recommends that no more than a quarter of a principal's evaluation be based on student achievement, and that the evaluation include multiple measures of performance within each of the six key domains. Further, ESEA must ensure that States and districts provide for relevant, reliable, valid evaluation systems that comprehensively evaluate principals by taking into account local contextual factors, and weighting performance components appropriately to the individual principal.

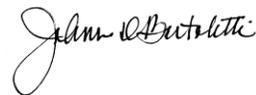
NAESP and NASSP represent instructional leaders from grade levels spanning Pre-K to 12. As such, collectively we support strengthening and coordinating services from early childhood to the early elementary grades (P-3 alignment) and joint professional development between early childhood educators and early elementary educators, including for principals. We also urge the committee to address greater support for middle level and high schools and their role in the education continuum, comprehensive literacy instruction from early childhood through grade 12 with an emphasis on reading and writing across the content areas, and resources and professional development for school leaders and teachers to better integrate technology in instruction.

Principals believe that ESEA must address these areas in some way as part of any education reform agenda. NAESP and NASSP hope that the committee will do more to highlight the issues that are critical to principals, and look forward to working with you and your colleagues. Our goal is to help promote legislation that will meet the current needs of schools and students through a balanced and appropriate federal role in education. We also hope that the House will work on the legislation in a consensus-driven manner to garner strong bipartisan support for a bill that will ultimately achieve a full reauthorization of ESEA in the 113th Congress.

Sincerely,



Gail Connelly
Executive Director
NAESP



JoAnn Bartoletti
Executive Director
NASSP