

April 10, 2015

The Honorable Lamar Alexander  
Chairman  
Health, Education, Labor and Pensions  
Committee  
U.S. Senate  
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Patty Murray  
Ranking Member  
Health, Education, Labor and Pensions  
Committee  
U.S. Senate  
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Chairman Alexander and Ranking Member Murray:

On behalf of the nation's 115,500 elementary, middle, and high school principals, assistant principals, and other school leaders, the American Federation of School Administrators (AFSA), the National Association of Elementary School Principals (NAESP), and the National Association of Secondary School Principals (NASSP) congratulate you on remaining committed to a bipartisan process to reauthorize the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA). In response to the negotiated bill that has been put forward for mark-up next week, our organizations are writing to provide comments concerning the "Every Child Achieves Act of 2015."

Overall, AFSA, NAESP, and NASSP applaud the Every Child Achieves Act's emphasis on supporting principals and school leaders. We specifically support the following provisions of the bill:

- Clarification of the term "School Leader" as the principal of an elementary, middle, or high school
- Inclusion of use of funds in Title II for a "School Leader Residency Program"
- Updated school leadership focused activities to improve the recruitment, preparation, placement, support, and retention of effective principals and other school leaders in high-need schools
- Allowable use of local Title II funds to develop induction and mentoring programs that are designed to improve school leadership and provide opportunities for mentor principals and other educators who are experienced, effective, and have demonstrated an ability to work with adult learners, as well as provide "personalized" professional development for educators
- Use of Title II funds to provide programs and activities to increase the knowledge base of teachers and principals on instruction in the early grades, which may include joint professional learning activities for principals leading preschool programs and early childhood educators focusing on transition issues for young children

We would also like to draw your attention to some concerns that we have with some principal-related provisions in the bill. First, we are pleased that the bill recognizes the value of principal-specific professional development opportunities and includes a provision that would allow states, under certain conditions, to reserve 3 percent of overall LEA funding for such activity. Our

organizations are concerned, however, that the bill makes principal professional development an optional activity subject to appropriations funding levels. Given the erratic nature of federal funding in recent years and in order for the provision to have a meaningful impact on directing funds to support principals as the bill intends, we urge you to make state reservations for principal professional development a *required* use of Title II funds.

Second, we appreciate the inclusion of improvements to principal evaluation systems where, if states and districts choose to focus on principal evaluation, they must address multiple measures and provide timely feedback and professional learning opportunities for principals. In addition, we recommend that the bill require states and districts to adjust and align principal evaluation systems to measure multiple domains of effective school leadership. We believe that Congress has a responsibility to provide more direct guidance to state and local efforts in order to support effective principal evaluation systems that will lead to improved school leadership performance. Therefore, we request that you incorporate into the bill the six domains of effective school leadership: student growth and achievement, school planning and progress, school culture, stakeholder support and engagement, professional qualities and practices, and professional growth and learning.

Finally, we appreciate the bill's inclusion of requirements that states and local educational agencies work with local stakeholders, including principals, to develop differentiated state accountability systems and measures that go beyond student achievement. We also concur with the bill's guidance to states and districts to utilize programs and strategies that have a strong evidence base. However, our organizations believe the bill should *require* states to base assessment and accountability systems on student growth to avoid an overreliance on standardized assessments. This should not be an option. Failure to make student growth the cornerstone of assessment and accountability systems may exacerbate the current problems in schools related to states' overreliance on high-stakes summative assessments.

Our groups support a number of other provisions contained in the negotiated bill that we hope will remain part of the final, Senate-approved version, including:

- The elimination of Adequate Yearly Progress measures and the 100 percent proficiency requirements
- The removal of the one-size-fits-all federal accountability system
- The removal of the unworkable school turnaround models that are required under the School Improvement Grants (SIG) program regulations
- The continued disaggregation of subgroup data and reporting
- The absence of a provision to transform Title I funding—which is designed to assist public schools with high concentrations of poverty and high-need students—into a public or private school voucher through “portability”

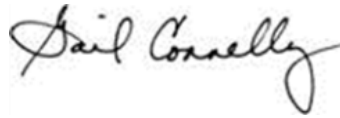
We respectfully encourage you to continue to focus Every Child Achieves on supporting principals and school leadership. AFSA, NAESP, and NASSP look forward to working with you and the other committee members to include these critical issues in the reauthorization of ESEA. Our goal is to help promote legislation that will meet the current needs of schools and students through a balanced, fair, and appropriate federal role in education. We thank you again for your

efforts to accomplish this goal through a bipartisan reauthorization process on behalf of the nation's educators and students.

Sincerely,



JoAnn D. Bartoletti  
Executive Director, NASSP



Gail Connelly  
Executive Director, NAESP



Diann Woodard  
President, AFSA