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April 6, 2014

House Education and the Workforce Committee  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Congress Member,

On behalf of AASA, The School Superintendents Association, I am writing to express our concerns with the Success and Opportunity through Quality Charter Schools Act (HR 10). AASA applauds the House committee for focusing on the issue in a bipartisan manner.

There are elements of the bill that are an improvement over current law, including increased accountability and requirements related to recruitment and retention of students with disabilities. That said, there is an important distinction to be made: The nation's traditional public schools accept and educate all students who walk through their doors and while there is always room for improvement, we remain concerned that the language in this bill 'encourages' (but stops short of requiring) charter schools to reach out to and educate all students, including special populations.

We advocate for public dollars in public schools and remain committed to the idea of equitable treatment—in accountability, flexibility and transparency—for all entities receiving federal education dollars. To the extent that this bill affords charter schools flexibilities that are not available to traditional schools, it is inequitable. To the extent that charter schools do not have to disclose the source/amount of private money, it is not transparent. We also question the equitability of a proposal that gives competitive priority to states that have fewer obstacles to scaling up and improving charter schools. The path of least resistance doesn't always correlate with effectiveness.

AASA is not opposed to charter schools; we are opposed to charter school policies that stop short of ensuring equitable treatment of all schools receiving public dollars. We welcome the chance support committee efforts to make improvements to this bill.

AASA urges the committee to extend its recent bipartisan momentum to the entire ESEA bill rather than cherry-picking individual pieces, and we look forward to working with the committee on this bill and other past-due reauthorizations.

Thank you,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Noelle Ellerson". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Noelle Ellerson  
Associate Executive Director, Policy & Advocacy