

Senator Lamar Alexander  
Chairman, Senate HELP Committee  
U.S. Senate  
Washington, D.C. 20510

Senator Patty Murray  
Ranking Member, Senate HELP Committee  
U.S. Senate  
Washington, D.C. 20510

April 13, 2015

Dear Senators,

On behalf of AASA, The School Superintendents Association, I write to express our **support for the *Every Child Achieves Act (ECAA) of 2015***. Thank you for your continued leadership on ESEA reauthorization, and for moving so quickly and deliberately to prioritize a complete and bipartisan reauthorization. This letter is drafted in response to the manager's mark, and AASA will send a separate letter in response to the amendments as filed for ECAA.

As we wrote in a [joint letter](#) supporting ESEA reauthorization with 49 of our state associations last week: "The current ESEA expired more than 7 years ago, meaning that our nation's K-6 graders have spent every day of their K-12 experience—to date—under an outdated and broken ESEA. Our students want and deserve more. Though Congress has been engaged in efforts to reauthorize ESEA for the past seven years, we cannot continue to ask our nation's schools and the students they serve to live under the patch-work approach offered by the administration's waivers. Congress alone can and should address the shortcomings of current law and the waivers." Your legislative proposal is a bold response to this call to action and a very strong step in the right direction.

This bill restores a more proper balance between federal, state and local government in public education. ECAA takes the pendulum of federal overreach and prescription rampant in current law and places it more squarely in the area of state and local expertise and autonomy. The bill recognizes the importance of empowering state and local leaders to use their professional knowledge and proximal location to make the decisions necessary to successfully adhere to their educational missions. It corrects flawed policy related to standards, accountability and assessments to ensure that all students are better positioned to learn and achieve.

ECAA makes significant improvements in the federal role in public education that AASA supports. These improvements include:

- Maintain student disaggregation by subgroup
- Eliminate the 100 percent proficiency mandate
- Eliminate SES/Choice
- Eliminate Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) and Annual Measurable Objectives (AMO)
- Return ownership of the accountability system to the state/local level
- Use of multiple measures throughout the K-12 spectrum
- Maintain school improvement for low performing schools, under state direction
- Maintain supplement/supplant language
- Reduce federal overreach into school improvement/turnaround strategies
- Put states in charge of designing a teacher evaluation system
- Eliminate requirements related to Highly Qualified Teacher provisions
- Reauthorize of the Rural Education Achievement Program (REAP)
- Does NOT include Title I portability or vouchers
- Preserve Title I Maintenance of Effort

- Preserve current comparability calculation
- Does NOT include funding caps

For all that it gets right, there are some areas where we still see room for improvement:

- Alternate Assessment: Eliminate the 1% alternate assessment cap. Local IEP teams are best positioned to know and ensure that children are assessed in a meaningful, fair and accurate manner, and do not need to be stymied by an arbitrary cap.
- Early Childhood: Any effort to expand ESEA to include early childhood education must include adequate funding. Early childhood education is critical, but merely expanding allowable uses, or adding new stand-alone programs but not identifying a pay-for, means further pressure on an already over-subscribed ESEA funding level, threatening to undermine both early education and ESEA.
- Education Technology: We are deeply concerned that the 2015 legislative proposal to reauthorize ESEA—the primary K12 federal education legislation—completely lacks a program committed to education technology. AASA is concerned by the disconnect between a federal focus on requiring schools to prepare students but then failing to recognize the importance of continued support for education technology and the related professional development. We urge the committee to incorporate a dedicated education technology program into its bill. A standalone education technology program ensures that the federal government prioritizes support for digital learning and education technology for all students, regardless of where they live.

As the bill goes to mark up, please note that any amendment related to vouchers or tuition tax credits will reverse our position of support, something that carries through to portability as well, both private and public. We cannot reiterate enough the importance of your bipartisan commitment to keeping portability and vouchers out of the ECAA bill, and we strongly urge the full committee to follow that lead.

In closing, the nation's public school superintendents are very appreciative of your efforts to reauthorize ESEA and the specifics of the proposal to be debated this week. We look forward to continuing to work with you and the Senate HELP committee as ESEA reauthorization remains a top legislative priority for our members, the nation's public school superintendents.

Sincerely,



Noelle Ellerson  
Associate Executive Director, Policy & Advocacy

CC: Members, Senate Health, Education, Labor & Pensions Committee