



December 1, 2015

The Honorable Lamar Alexander
Chairman, United States Senate Committee on
Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions
428 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable John Kline
Chairman, United States House of
Representatives Committee on Education and the
Workforce
2176 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Patty Murray, Ranking Member
Senate Subcommittee on Labor, Health and
Human Services, Education and Related Agencies
Appropriations
135 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Bobby Scott
Ranking Member, United States House of
Representatives Committee on Education and the
Workforce
2101 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Sen. Alexander, Sen. Murray, Rep. Kline, and Rep. Scott:

We are writing to support the S.1177, “Every Student Succeeds Act.” Years overdue, the successful reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) will provide the stability and flexibility that states, districts, and schools need to best serve all of their students.

As an organization of state and local education leaders who have implemented successful education reforms in their own states and communities, and are committed to enabling more children to succeed by supporting the implementation of reforms nationwide, Chiefs for Change applauds the proposed legislation’s focus on ensuring more flexibility, providing choices for children in struggling schools, and maintaining provisions that ensure no child falls through the cracks. We urge Congress to support the passage of this critically important legislation.

Specifically, we are pleased that many of our priorities for reauthorization were included in the final Conference agreement, including:

- Ensuring states develop challenging academic standards and maintain annual testing in mathematics and reading, as well as grade-span testing in science.
- Allowing for state-based accountability systems that provide the structure and flexibility necessary to ensure that schools and districts are held accountable for success, particularly focused on academic achievement for all children – including ensuring school districts take appropriate action to improve schools identified by states due to low-performance or low graduation rates.

- Providing funds for states to support school improvement programs.
- Enabling expanded choice programs through a new, 3% set-aside to enable states to support direct student services, including tutoring, course access, and public school choice, in districts seeking to provide these choice activities.
- Maintaining strong support for charter schools, including federal support for replication and expansion of existing high performing charters.
- Providing additional incentives for schools to ensure that students with even the most significant cognitive disabilities graduate.

This legislation signals a new era for federal/state efforts to improve educational achievement for all students. And while we are very appreciative of the added flexibility that states will have to set up their own accountability systems, we realize that with this flexibility comes more responsibility for states to get this right. Our states and local school districts are up to the task, and we pledge our commitment developing accountability systems that focus on improving achievement. No more excuses about federal micro-management; our states will fully "own" the new accountability systems developed under this legislation.

Again, thank you for your efforts to successfully reauthorize this critically important law, and we congratulate you for reaching a bipartisan agreement. Chiefs for Change believes the proposed legislation is a major step in the right direction and accomplishes several important goals that will generate positive change for students and teachers across the country. Please do not hesitate to reach out to us if we can be of any further assistance.

Sincerely,



Michael Magee, Ph.D.
CEO

