



The National Association for Magnet and Theme-based Schools

Every Student Succeeds Act Improves Access to Magnet Programs and Provides Needed Support to Address Growing Problem of Resegregation in American Public Schools

Washington, DC December 1, 2015 - This week, the U.S. Senate and House of Representatives released the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA). This legislation will reauthorize the Elementary and Secondary Education Act also known as the No Child Left Behind Act. In a huge victory for magnet schools across the country, the ESSA would expand federal support for magnet programs. It would reauthorize the Magnet Schools Assistance Program (MSAP) and allow funding for MSAP to gradually grow from its current level of \$91 million to \$108 million in FY 2020. In addition, the ESSA would extend the length of the grant by two years and increase cumulative grant funding for successful magnet programs to \$15 million.

Magnet Schools of America (MSA) Executive Director Todd Mann stated, "We are very pleased that Congress has acknowledged the value and need to expand magnet schools in our public education system. The continuation of this crucial support will help countless school districts create new innovative theme-based magnet programs that will prepare our students to live in diverse communities and flourish in an increasingly competitive workforce."

In addition to reauthorizing the program, the ESSA makes several strategic changes to (MSAP):

- It prioritizes the creation of magnet schools that promote socioeconomic integration and diversity. This acknowledges a wide body of research that shows that the socioeconomic composition of schools is the greatest factor affecting student achievement.
- The ESSA would improve the timeliness of the MSAP grant by instructing the U.S. Department of Education to disperse its grant funds at the beginning of the summer. Typically, MSAP grants are awarded in late September after the start of the school year, which limits the ability of school districts to properly plan before first-year magnet implementation.
- The bill would encourage school districts to work in coordination to break down barriers that sustain racial and socioeconomic isolation by creating interdistrict or regional magnet programs. This provision recognizes that the greatest amount of school segregation now occurs between school districts, rather than at the neighborhood level.
- The act would also eliminate the prohibition against using MSAP funds for transportation purposes, as long as it is sustainable and these costs do not constitute a significant portion of grant funds. This will help school districts improve access to new thriving magnet schools for all students while ensuring that a vast majority of MSAP funds will support core grant activities.

The ESSA emerged after months of bipartisan negotiations and is the combination of two bills that were passed in the House and Senate over the summer. The legislation will be considered by a bicameral conference committee that consists of Republicans and Democrats before a final vote is taken by the entire Congress in the coming weeks.

MSA is optimistic that by passing this legislation, America's public schools will be able to move out of an era of testing and sanctioning. This action will also help stem the tide of growing resegregation occurring in our classrooms and ensure that all students are provided with equitable educational opportunities. MSA urges Congress and the Administration to seriously consider the merits of this bipartisan proposal and to reach an agreement that will reauthorize the Elementary and Secondary Education Act before the end of the year.

MISSION STATEMENT

Providing leadership for high-quality innovative instructional programs that promote choice, equity, diversity, and academic excellence for all students.