



WASHINGTON OFFICE • 1730 RHODE ISLAND AVENUE, N.W. • WASHINGTON DC 20036

202-835-0414 • FAX: 202-835-0424

Agudath
Israel
of America
אגודת ישראל באמריקה

Rabbi Abba Cohen
Vice President for Federal Government Affairs
Washington Director and Counsel

December 2, 2015

The Honorable John Kline, Chairman
House Education and Workforce Committee
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Lamar Alexander, Chairman
Senate HELP Committee
Washington, D.C. 20510

Re: ESEA Reauthorization and Private Schools

Dear Chairman Kline and Chairman Alexander:

I write on behalf of Agudath Israel of America to express our strong support for provisions in S.1177, the Every Student Succeeds Act, that relate to participation of private school students in federal education programs. S. 1177, which reauthorizes the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA), was recently reported out of Conference Committee, and both House and Senate are expected to take up the measure in the coming days.

Agudath Israel is a national Orthodox Jewish organization, with members and chapters in many parts of the country. One of our responsibilities in Washington is to advocate on behalf of the hundreds of elementary and secondary schools that come under the umbrella of the National Society for Hebrew Day Schools. For half a century, we have been actively engaged in education-related legislation and public policy.

Indeed, in 1964, when the original ESEA was being considered, Agudath Israel, among others, strongly advocated for the "equitable participation" of private school children in the newly-established federal aid programs. And, in enshrining the concept into law, Congress made a strong statement that *all* children should be afforded the educational assistance and opportunity our government has to offer, *regardless of the type of school they attend*.

Unfortunately, for various reasons, "equitable participation" has not always lived up to its promise. All-too-often private school children do not receive the full measure of educational assistance they are entitled to and that Congress envisioned for them. We are pleased that, in S. 1177, the private school provisions set forth in ESEA have been greatly strengthened and will, we believe, go far in bringing greater equity and opportunity to *all* of America's schoolchildren.

We greatly appreciate your efforts and congratulate you on this important achievement.

Sincerely yours,

Rabbi Abba Cohen

RAC/me