

July 15, 2013

The Honorable John Kline
2439 Rayburn Building
Washington, DC 20003

Dear Chairman Kline:

AASA, the school superintendents association, strongly supports your vision for the future federal role in education, HR 5, the Student Success Act. The Student Success Act begins the long overdue process of improving the federal role in helping public schools improve educational outcomes for low income students. HR 5 provides the foundation for innovation in curriculum, instruction, assessment and accountability that are central to improve the lives of low income students through an improved educational foundation.

The innovations needed to help low-income, minority, and other high need students graduate from high school career and college ready depend on changes that fit the students, staff and families in each community. There is not a single approach that can work in 13,625 school districts and 100,000 public schools. Innovation occurs when teachers, principals, superintendents and parents are encouraged to continuously search for better approaches to increase learning. The current approach to innovation embedded in NCLB, and the federal waiver process that requires waiting for federal innovation or waiting to have the US Department of Education approve your ideas, is slow, cumbersome and not conducive to local and state innovation. Asking everyone to think about how to achieve a better future surely beats waiting on answers from Washington.

On the other hand, HR 5 retains the best features of NCLB by requiring standards for what students should know and be able to do, and assessments that provide a clear picture of what students, schools and school districts are doing to make progress toward career and college readiness. The single best feature of NCLB, disaggregation of data for all subgroups of students, is retained exactly as it was in NCLB. However, the system for evaluating professional performance is vastly improved by eliminating an impossible goal, and a system of accountability that exaggerated failure. Under HR 5 states are free to pick approaches to education that fit their circumstances. For example, the 39 states granted waivers from NCLB can keep their current system; modify their current system or build a better system, because they are free to innovate.

HR 5 is not perfect and we hope that some amendments are accepted to focus more funds on high poverty schools, retain current maintenance of effort provisions, and even the playing field between charter schools and public schools. However, AASA will switch to vehement opposition in the event a voucher is added.

In closing AASA thanks you and the Education and Workforce Committee for developing a new vision for the federal role in education built on mutual trust and respect that we wholeheartedly support.

Yours Truly,



Bruce Hunter
Associate Executive Director
AASA: The School Superintendents Association