



## Committee on Catholic Education

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December 1, 2015

The Honorable Lamar Alexander  
Chairman  
Health, Education, Labor and  
Pensions Committee  
United States Senate  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable John Kline  
Chairman  
Education and Workforce Committee  
United States House of Representative  
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Senator Alexander and Representative Kline,

I write you today on behalf of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops Committee on Catholic Education to express our strong support for provisions in *The Every Student Succeeds Act* (S. 1177) that improve the conditions connected with providing equitable services for students and teachers in religious, private and independent schools.

Since its inception in 1965, the Elementary and Secondary Education Act has long upheld the principle that students in need, regardless of whether they attend a public or private school, are entitled to an equitable share of services and benefits. However, following the passage of *No Child Left Behind* in 2001, this principle has been continually eroded with private school students and their teachers no longer receiving the equitable share of services and benefits to which they are entitled and that Congress intended. We are pleased that *The Every Student Succeeds Act* takes a major step to correct those inequities and strengthen the historical safeguards designed to insure the fair and equitable treatment of private school students and their teachers.

The USCCB Committee on Catholic Education provides guidance for the educational mission of the Church in the United States which includes more than 1,974,000 students in 6,594 Catholic elementary and high schools. As the U.S. Bishops reiterated in their 2005 statement *Renewing Our Commitment to Catholic Elementary and Secondary Schools in the Third Millennium*, “government at all levels, acting in partnership with parents, has a responsibility to provide adequate professional and material resources to assist all children to attain a quality education.” *The Every Student Succeeds Act*’s provisions related to improving access to services to students in need and their teachers, regardless of where they attend school, makes a substantial contribution to putting the needs of students and their families first.

Passage of *The Every Student Succeeds Act* will be the next critical step towards restoring equity and ensuring that all children are afforded the educational services, benefits and opportunity our government has to offer, regardless of the type of school they attend.

With prayerful best wishes,

Most Reverend George J. Lucas  
Archbishop of Omaha  
Chairman, Committee on Catholic Education