



December 1, 2015

The Honorable John Kline
Chairman
Education and the Workforce Committee

United States House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Lamar Alexander
Chairman
Health, Education, Labor and Pensions
Committee

United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Representative Klein and Senator Alexander:

The National Catholic Educational Association (NCEA) strongly supports the *Every Student Succeeds Act* (ESSA) and its provisions that strengthen the requirements for equitable participation of religious and private school students and teachers in several of the Title programs.

Since 1965 students, teachers and other private and religious school personnel have the statutory right to participate in several K-12 education programs authorized by the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA). Although Catholic school students and their teachers have been participating in ESEA programs since their inception, the benefits available to them have diminished significantly due to funding formulas in the last reauthorization and their interpretations in U.S. Department of Education regulations. ESSA's clear and specific language pertaining to the provision of services to private school children and their teachers is a significant action toward restoring the equity that has long been part of the ESEA tradition of providing benefits to educationally needy elementary and secondary students living in areas with high concentrations of children from low-income families.

NCEA is pleased to see Congress advance this bipartisan legislation that it has long championed and encourages you and your colleagues in the House and Senate to complete the process and enact S. 1177 into law. We thank you for your strong leadership in advancing this legislation that promotes equitable services to students and teachers in religious and independent schools.

NCEA is the largest private professional education organization in the world, representing 150,000 Catholic educators serving 6 million students in Catholic elementary and secondary schools, in religious education programs, in seminaries, and in colleges and universities.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Robert R. Bimonte" followed by a stylized flourish.

Robert R. Bimonte, FSC
President