



June 18, 2013

The Honorable John Kline
Chairman
U.S. House Committee on Education & the Workforce
2181 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Chairman Kline:

On behalf of the National Alliance for Public Charter Schools, thank you for your leadership in promoting growth, accountability and equity for charter schools in H.R. 5, The Student Success Act. We support your efforts to reauthorize the *Elementary and Secondary Education Act* (ESEA), as it includes many principles from the National Alliance's reauthorization proposal. The National Alliance believes that in order for the public charter sector to grow and continue to produce results through innovation, the reauthorization of ESEA should significantly expand support for both the creation of new charter schools and the replication and expansion of successful charter schools. At the same time, ESEA reauthorization presents an opportunity to encourage innovation on a national scale and to roll back the encroachment of charter school freedoms that threaten to stifle student outcomes.

As you know, public charter schools are impacted by all of the ESEA and its accompanying requirements. Under H.R. 5, it is clear that authorizers oversee accountability for charter schools and failing schools can be closed without unnecessary federal school turnaround mandates. We appreciate that you have eliminated the burdensome and ineffective definition of a "highly qualified teacher" so that charter schools can more easily hire, retain or fire effective teachers.

The Student Success Act would improve the quality of the Charter Schools Program (CSP) by prioritizing funds to states that have laws that are best positioned to support the growth of quality charter schools, without arbitrary caps, and with equitable financing. We are pleased that the bill expands the pool of statewide entities that would be eligible to administer the CSP to governors and state charter school boards. We also support provisions to expand the use of state funds for the replication and expansion of high quality charter schools with a track record of improving student achievement. H.R. 5 also continues to support charter schools with the costs of acquiring, constructing and renovating facilities. Funding for adequate facilities continues to be a challenge for charter schools, especially as they grow and expand.

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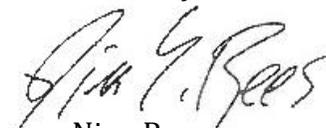
As the bill moves forward in the legislative process, we encourage the inclusion of a number of additional provisions:

- The authorization of a competitive grant program that allows high-performing charter management organizations (CMOs) to apply directly to the Secretary for the replication and expansion of successful schools. Since FY2010, CSP Grants for the Replication and Expansion of High-Quality Schools have allowed some of the most promising of charter models that have a proven track record of increasing academic achievement and attainment for all students to scale.
- The addition of charter support organizations (CSO) as eligible entities to administer the CSP at the state level.
- Additional language to provide charter schools the flexibility to use their CSP funds for all necessary costs, and to reduce the current confusion in the field about use of funds, as well as burdensome accounting requirements.
- Additional safeguards in Title I to ensure funding equity for new and expanding charter schools.
- Provisions that would require states and LEAs to develop Title I plans in consultation with charter school leaders.
- Use of charter school credit enhanced financing for predevelopment costs that help schools determine whether a site is appropriate for a school.

Finally, the demand for charter schools far exceeds the supply. The National Alliance estimates that the current demand for available charter school seats exceeds supply by 600,000 applications in the 2011-12 school year. Based on that estimate, at least 1,700 new or expanded charter schools would be needed to meet current demand. We very much appreciate and support the increased authorization for the CSP in HR 5. However, we are concerned that the increase will not correspond with the growth of the movement, and thus restrict the sector's ability to meet parental demand. Thus, we strongly encourage the House to increase the authorization level of the program.

Thank you again for your leadership and vision on H.R. 5. We look forward to working with you as ESEA progresses through the House.

Sincerely,



Nina Rees
President and CEO