



The Education Trust–Midwest

Closing the gaps in opportunity and achievement, pre-k through college.

January 30, 2015

Committee on Health, Education, Labor and Pensions
428 Senate Dirksen Office Building
Washington, DC 02501

Dear Senators:

The Education Trust-Midwest is dedicated to the high academic achievement of all Michigan students. Our goal is to close the gaps in opportunity and achievement for Michigan children, regardless of background. As a nonpartisan, data-driven education policy, research and advocacy organization, we are focused first and foremost on doing what is right for Michigan children.

As the Senate begins its work to draft a reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA), we urge you to make sure the law continues its fundamental work to ensure all students are getting a great education. Specifically, we ask that you ensure the following pillars of the law are maintained:

1. Annual statewide assessments for students in grades 3-8, and once in high school

- One of the most important ways to be sure students are learning and growing academically is through reliable, comparable annual statewide assessments.
- Assessments are the cornerstone of accountability systems, and they ensure the most vulnerable students' achievement gaps are not hidden within larger groups.
- Statewide annual assessments provide a common way of measuring student progress on state standards across classrooms, schools, and districts.

2. Statewide accountability systems that expect and support all students to graduate from high school ready for college and career

- Accountably ratings should be based predominantly on performance on statewide assessments, high school graduation rates, and other measures of college and career readiness for all groups of students, with an expectation of more progress for groups that are behind.
- States should reward schools that perform well for all groups and ensure supports and interventions in those in which any group consistently underperforms.
- This is important for all students, and particularly critical for low-income students, students of color, students with disabilities, and English language learners because they have not traditionally been as well served in public education.

3. Transparent data reporting to parents and the public

- Disaggregated data on student achievement, graduation rates, school climate and discipline, teacher quality, and per-pupil expenditures should be publicly reported at the state, district, and school level.

The above critical pillars of the law regarding elementary and second education are critical to the success of all of our students.

Thank you for your consideration,

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