June 30, 2015

United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator,

A reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) that provides stable, transparent, and uniform policies that are applicable to all states and districts is long overdue. The current federal law setting K–12 education policy in our nation, the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act, is woefully outdated, and the delay in renewing it has presented numerous challenges that have led to a system of temporary waivers and varying requirements across the states. ASCD, representing 125,000 educators dedicated to learning, teaching, and leading, believes that the Every Child Achieves Act (S.1177) would provide the long-term vision and programmatic and funding stability that our students, educators, and schools need. The legislation reflects the tireless efforts of the leadership of the Senate Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions (HELP) Committee and its willingness to set aside ideological differences to produce a bill that enjoys the support of Republicans and Democrats. We urge you to vote for the bill when it comes to the Senate floor and encourage you to vote against any amendments that would jeopardize the integrity of the core bipartisan agreement.

Accountability
ASCD appreciates that the bill shifts significant authority over education decision making to states and districts while maintaining important accountability and reporting requirements for schools. We are pleased that the bill ensures that states may not rely solely on state standardized tests in assessing student performance as part of their accountability systems. ASCD has been calling for more meaningful accountability systems that promote continuous support and improvement and align with the broader outcomes of college, career, and citizenship readiness we collectively want for our students. In particular, such systems should incorporate a variety of measures that more fully reflect a comprehensive definition of student success, accurately measure student learning, and systematically track educators’ efforts to engage and support learners. As reported by the HELP Committee, S.1177
requires that state systems include at least one additional measure of student performance for elementary and secondary students. We appreciate this expansion to ensure that states must consider some additional criteria beyond state standardized tests for measuring student success and school quality. Nevertheless, we urge you to support amendment language being proposed by Senators Reed, Kirk, Baldwin, and Brown that would expand the indicators states must track and report on in order to address disparities in access to resources crucial to student success.

**Funding Flexibility**
The role of the federal government in education has historically been to provide equity for and access to educational opportunities for disadvantaged and traditionally underserved student populations. Indeed, that is the basic premise of the federal Title I program. As reported by the Committee, S.1177 does not include the funding provision known as “portability” that would significantly alter the way Title I funds are distributed and that would result in a shift of federal resources away from the students and schools most in need of such support. Any such formula change would have a significant effect on states and districts nationwide. Moreover, other Title I formula changes are being proposed that would adjust the way state and district allocations are determined. These proposed changes are being promoted as a way to ensure a more equitable distribution of federal funds. However, because the funding shifts among and across states and districts may be profound, adopting them in the course of this debate could jeopardize passage of this bill. Thus, we urge you to vote against any amendment that would alter the current formulas allocating Title I funding.

**Whole Child**
ASCD is a strong proponent of a whole child approach to education that ensures that each child in each school in each community is healthy, safe, engaged, supported, and challenged. Thus, we applaud the provisions in S.1177 that promote a whole child approach to education. These include supports for school counselors, physical education, magnet schools, rural education, after school programs, violence prevention, literacy, and arts education. We urge you to support the bill as is and oppose any efforts to strip these programs from the bill.

**Supporting Teachers and School Leaders**
Teachers and school leaders are the two most important in-school factors affecting student achievement. Thus, the foremost strategy and funding priority for federal education policy must be to support adequate and effective preparation and ongoing
professional development for educators to improve student outcomes. S.1177 provides strong support for educators, and we are particularly pleased that the bill provides specific supports for principals and other school leaders, updates the definition of professional development that recognizes today’s best practices, and includes opportunities to support and encourage teacher leadership. In addition, we appreciate the inclusion in S.1177 of language that requires districts to use multiple measures to evaluate educators if they choose to use Title II funds for educator evaluation systems.

It is vitally important to ensure robust funding to support educators and school leaders in Title II. The provisions that allow 100 percent transferability of funds between Title II and Title IV programs—and between Title II or Title IV and Title I programs—would jeopardize the availability of funding specifically allotted for educator professional development. The investments made through both Title II and Title IV help schools meet the goal of ensuring a high-quality education for all students, particularly those with special needs such as socio-economically disadvantaged, English language learners, and students with disabilities, for whom effective educators and nonacademic supports are especially important. Thus, we strongly urge you to support any amendments to the bill that would maintain current law’s 50 percent transfer authority, which would provide some flexibility while preserving a minimum level of funding for professional development.

We strongly support the Every Child Achieves Act, S. 1177, and urge you to vote for its passage when the bill is considered on the Senate floor. Thank you for the opportunity to share our views on this important education bill. For further information or if you or your staff has any questions, please contact ASCD Advocacy Manager Megan Wolfe at megan.wolfe@ascd.org or 703-575-5616.

Cordially,

David Griffith
Public Policy Director