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February 27, 2012

The Honorable John Kline
Chairman
Committee on Education and the Workforce
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable George Miller
Ranking Member
Committee on Education and the Workforce
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Kline and Representative Miller,

On behalf of ASCD's 150,000 members, I want to thank you for your leadership in making meaningful progress toward reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) through the Student Success Act (HR 3989) and Encouraging Innovation and Effective Teaching Act (HR 3990). We applaud the elimination of the impractical components of the No Child Left Behind Act's (NCLB) adequate yearly progress system and are gratified that the bills strengthen teacher and school leader effectiveness. We believe that continuing to require schools and districts to track disaggregated data will be crucial to ensuring that student subgroups receive appropriate focus. And we support the requirement that student growth be included as a factor in state-developed accountability systems.

Together, the Encouraging Innovation and Effective Teaching Act and Student Success Act return more education decision-making authority to the local level, reflecting the belief that states and districts understand the unique strengths and challenges of their communities and how best to maximize those strengths to improve performance. Although we appreciate this flexibility, we are concerned that without the requisite accountability, advances that have been made in closing achievement gaps, particularly among the most vulnerable student populations, could be jeopardized.

Teacher quality is the number one in-school influence on student success in the classroom. The Encouraging Innovation and Effective Teachers Act supports teacher quality by allowing federal funds to be used for professional development that is evidence-based, job-embedded, and continuous. However, opportunities should be allowed for this type of professional development for teachers in subjects beyond those defined as core academic subjects in ESEA, such as physical education. The bill also appropriately allows funding for teacher induction and mentoring and promotes teacher evaluation based on multiple criteria beyond students' test scores. On that point, student assessment results used for teacher evaluations should be for the subject in which the educator teaches.



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ASCD is committed to supporting educators' efforts to prepare students for college, career, and citizenship, particularly through a whole child approach that ensures that students are healthy, safe, engaged, supported, and challenged. Student success in life beyond graduation is dependent on many crucial factors, including a credible, comprehensive, and well-rounded education that includes instruction not only in math, language arts, and science, but also in art, civics and government, history, foreign languages, health education, and physical education. We strongly encourage you to maintain competitive grant programs that support these subjects as they exist in current law and also require states and districts to publicly report the student achievement data they currently compile in these subjects to bring attention to their importance and help promote accountability for them.

Finally, Title I is already underfunded and not able to fully serve all eligible students, nor is it able to help meet the increased demands being placed on states and districts. Tying potential increases in Title I funding to the rate of inflation without regard for the number of students in school or of the supports they might need will further impair schools' and districts' ability to ensure college, career, and citizenship readiness.

We urge you to continue to refine and improve the Encouraging Innovation and Effective Teachers Act and the Student Success Act so that they garner the widespread support necessary to expedite their passage through the legislative process. ESEA reauthorization needs to be completed in 2012 so that schools, districts, and states can move ahead with planning for their coming school years with certainty and without having to rely on a patchwork system of temporary waivers.

Thank you for your consideration of our views. If you would like further information about ASCD's positions on ESEA, please contact Megan Wolfe at 703-575-5616 or megan.wolfe@ascd.org. We look forward to working with you and the members of the committee on legislation to improve school quality, teacher effectiveness, and student achievement.

Cordially,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "David Griffith". The signature is written in a cursive style and is located below the typed name.

David Griffith
Director of Public Policy

Cc: Members, Committee on Education and the Workforce