



July 18, 2013

United States House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Representative,

On behalf of the National Women's Law Center, an organization that for over 40 years has worked to expand the possibilities for women and girls in the areas of education and employment, family economic security, and health, we write to oppose the Student Success Act, H.R. 5, which would amend and reauthorize the Elementary and Secondary Education Act ("ESEA"). We urge you to vote against passage of H.R. 5 and to speak out on behalf of students during the debate on the bill.

The Student Success Act retreats from the federal government's historic role in protecting equal opportunity and access for all students to a quality education. It eliminates the federal focus on improving the achievement of underprivileged students by – among other things – abandoning accountability for the education of subgroups, eliminating goals for student growth and improvement, ignoring disparities in the distribution of resources, and allowing federal funds targeted for vulnerable groups of students, such as English language learners and Native American students, to be allocated for other purposes. The bill fails to advance the current movement toward college- and career-ready standards. It does not adequately address the need for schools to create an environment conducive to learning, where all students feel safe from bullying, harassment, and excessive disciplinary practices that push kids out of school, and it fails to enhance current data reporting requirements so as to ensure that interventions can be meaningful and effectively targeted.

To be sure, the Center recognizes that ESEA's accountability framework needs improvement. The past two reauthorizations prodded states and local educational agencies to close gaps in achievement and high school completion, yet our public education system continues to shortchange the students who need the most by systematically providing them with less. The solution, however, is not for the federal government to completely cede all responsibility back to states and school districts that for so long ignored the needs of and harbored low expectations for students of color, low-income students, English language learners, and students with disabilities. Any reauthorization of ESEA must, at minimum, require states to set clear goals and provide instructional support so that all students receive an education that prepares them for success in college and careers. And it should require currently reported data to be "cross-

tabulated” or further disaggregated, at least by race and gender, so that disparities will not be masked and interventions can be targeted as needed.

The Center strongly urges you to vote against the Student Success Act and to be vocal about your opposition on the House floor. We cannot abandon the long-standing federal role in ensuring that students of color, low-income students, English learners, and students with disabilities have access to a robust and well-rounded curriculum and supports that address a range of student needs so that they are better prepared to succeed in the classroom.

If you have any questions, please feel free to contact Fatima Goss Graves or Lara S. Kaufmann at 202-588-5180.

Sincerely,



Marcia D. Greenberger
Co-President



Fatima Goss Graves
Vice President for Education & Employment