



July 6, 2015

*Via electronic mail*

**Re: Opposition to H.R. 5 and Support for Scott Substitute Amendment**

Dear Representative:

On behalf of the National Women's Law Center, an organization that for 43 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 urge you to vote NO on H.R. 5 and vote YES on Ranking Member Scott's substitute amendment.

The Center is a leader in the struggle to ensure that women and girls have equal educational opportunities and has worked since Congress enacted Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972 to advance and protect the rights of all students to a quality education.

We need an ESEA reauthorization bill that includes an accountability and school improvement framework that will meaningfully improve educational equity and close achievement gaps so that *all* students graduate high school prepared for 21st Century post-secondary learning and careers. While the current ESEA structure needs improvement, its essential role addressing the needs of the most disadvantaged students must be maintained. Congress must not give unfettered discretion to states and school districts that historically have disregarded the needs and potential of disadvantaged students. The federal government's oversight is critical to ensuring that boys and girls of color, low-income students, English learners, and students with disabilities in every state 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.

Unfortunately, H.R. 5 falls far short of the mark. 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 that would ensure that interventions can be meaningful and effectively targeted. We urge you to vote NO on H.R. 5.

We also urge you to vote YES on the Scott substitute amendment, which would require states to establish accountability systems that set performance, growth, and graduation targets for all students, including subgroups of students (racial and ethnic groups, low-income students, English learners, and students with disabilities), to ensure that all students graduate from high school ready for college and careers. The Scott amendment gives states flexibility to judge the performance of schools based on multiple measures of student learning and “equity indicators” of school climate and resource equity, while maintaining an important focus on student growth and academic achievement. It also ensures that federal dollars will be targeted to historically underserved students and schools and requires greater transparency in data reporting so that disparities between subgroups will not be masked and interventions can be targeted most effectively.

The Scott amendment provides a sorely needed update to the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, replacing the overly rigid No Child Left Behind and promoting state and local reforms while still maintaining important federal protections for all students. In addition, the Scott amendment recognizes the importance of increasing young children's access to high-quality early learning opportunities.

\*\*\*\*\*

Again, the Center urges you to reject H.R. 5 and vote in favor of the Scott substitute amendment. We look forward to working with you as the reauthorization process continues. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact Fatima Goss Graves, Helen Blank or Lara S. Kaufmann at 202-588-5180.

Sincerely,



Fatima Goss Graves  
Vice President for Education & Employment



Lara S. Kaufmann  
Senior Counsel and Director of  
Education Policy for At-Risk Students