

Civil Rights Groups, Business Groups, State Education Officials, and Education Advocates on ESEA Proposal: “We Cannot Support the Bill at this Time” *Groups Stress Federal Accountability*

American Civil Liberties Union
Business Coalition for Student Achievement
Council of Parent Attorneys and Advocates, Inc.
Chiefs for Change
Disability Rights Education and Defense Fund
Democrats for Education Reform
The Education Trust
The Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights*
League of United Latin American Citizens
MALDEF (the Mexican American Legal Defense and Educational Fund)

NAACP
NAACP Legal Defense and Educational Fund, Inc.
National Center for Learning Disabilities
National Council of La Raza
National Down Syndrome Society
National Urban League
National Women’s Law Center
The New Teacher Project
Poverty & Race Research Action Council
Southeast Asia Research and Action Center
U.S. Chamber of Commerce



Disability Rights Education & Defense Fund

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Washington, DC – In an unprecedented show of unity in advance of today’s Senate mark-up of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 2011, a bipartisan coalition of civil rights groups, business associations, statewide education officials, and education advocates are declining to support the bill proposed by HELP Committee Chairman Harkin and Ranking Member Enzi due in large part to the absence of accountability measures that narrow the achievement gaps for low-income students, students of color, English language learners, and students with disabilities. Their joint statement is as follows:

“As representatives of the millions of students with disabilities, low-income students, students of color, English-language learners and migrant students who are studying in our nation’s schools, both boys and girls, we cannot support the Elementary and Secondary Education Reauthorization Act of 2011 at this time. The bill’s weak accountability system excludes the vast majority of children we represent, and is a major barrier to our organizations’ support.

We applaud the inclusion of much-needed reforms on college and career ready standards and assessments; accountability for dropout factories, more equitable funding within districts, a focus on access to high-level STEM courses for underrepresented groups, and improvements in limiting alternate assessments for students with disabilities and recognize the benefits that these provisions could yield for students.

In its current form, however, states would not have to set *any* measurable achievement and progress targets or even graduation rate goals. They would be required to take action to improve only a small number of low-performing schools. In schools which aren’t among the states’ very worst performing, huge numbers of low-achieving students will slip through the cracks.

Federal funding must be attached to firm, ambitious and unequivocal demands for higher achievement, high school graduation rates and gap closing. We know that states, school districts, and schools needed a more modern and focused law. However, we respectfully believe that the bill goes too far in providing flexibility by marginalizing the focus on the achievement of disadvantaged students.

Although we are unable to support the legislation in its current form, we hope to work with Chairman Harkin and Ranking Member Enzi to address our concerns as the process moves forward.”

Signed:

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* Several members of The Leadership Conference coalition do not support the views expressed in this statement.