

Dear Senators,

We want to applaud the leadership and vision you have demonstrated in the statement of principles you put forth on the reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act. We wholeheartedly share your goal of a bipartisan reauthorization that reflects the pivotal role education reform can and should play in our nation's continued economic recovery.

As you point out, the federal government has a critical role to play in our educational system, focused primarily on ensuring that all children, regardless of their race, income, or ethnicity have equal educational opportunities. Governors, state legislators, local elected officials, and community leaders across the country have affirmed this principle through their embrace of key initiatives spearheaded over the past two years via Race to the Top, Investing in Innovation (i3), and other new, targeted federal ventures. We hope that others in Washington will follow your lead and use these successes as a foundation and model for a new era of federal, state, and local partnerships rather than, as some have proposed to do, attempt to interfere with or override them.

We are particularly encouraged by the emphasis your working group has placed on building human capital and identifying our most effective teachers. We are also pleased at your focus on ensuring that the students who most need them have access to those teachers identified as our most effective. Initiatives such as these can help ensure that federal resources reach and add value for the students and educators they are intended to serve.

As you have so aptly pointed out, none of the reforms contained in any ESEA reauthorization will be successful if we do not dramatically improve our system for recruiting, training, evaluating, supporting, retaining and paying teachers and school leaders. We think the outline you have presented, under which fragmented or ineffective teacher and school leader programs are consolidated and focused into bold and innovative efforts to achieve these goals is in fact the most viable one for producing dramatic and enduring change.

Equally important, we concur that the comparability loophole should be closed and that increasingly limited federal resources must be spent in such a way that they really do provide extra help to the schools that most need it. Further, local funding decisions – like all policy decisions – should be transparent. The more that parents and taxpayers, individually or as groups and organizations, know where and how precious public funds are spent, the more empowered they will be as the ultimate agents of educational change and reform.

Your task will not be easy. Sending more federal money out with fewer expectations is the path of least resistance. But, successful education reform efforts, whether at the

federal, state or local level, historically have hinged on changing that dynamic. We stand ready to support you in crafting a renewed ESEA that makes federal investment contingent on high expectations, equity for all children, and innovative ways of providing high-quality instruction to students. In short, an ESEA that, 10 years from now, we will all be proud of.

Sincerely,

Center for American Progress Action Fund  
The Chalkboard Project  
Children's Defense Fund  
ConnCan  
Democrats for Education Reform  
Education Equality Project  
Education Reform Now  
The Education Trust  
Get Smart Schools  
Hope Street Group  
Mississippi First  
National Alliance for Public Charter Schools  
National Council of La Raza  
The New Teacher Project  
Rodel Foundation of Delaware  
Stand for Children - Colorado  
Success Charter Network  
Teach Plus  
50CAN (50-State Campaign for Achievement Now)