

Sign-on Statement – Opposition to Student Success Act (as of 7-16-13)

This week, the House will begin debate on the Student Success Act, a bill that would reauthorize the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA), currently known as No Child Left Behind.

The undersigned organizations — including a broad cross section of civil rights, disability, and education organizations — write to firmly oppose this bill. Together, we represent the millions of students with disabilities, low-income students, students of color, English-language learners, migrant students and LGBT students — both boys and girls — who, through education, are working to build bright futures.

All agree that ESEA must be updated. However, this bill is not an update; it is a rollback. It undermines the core American value of equal opportunity in education embodied in *Brown v. Board of Education*. Specifically, it abandons accountability for the achievement and learning gains of subgroups of disadvantaged students who for generations have been harmed by low academic expectations. The bill also eliminates goals and performance targets for academic achievement, removes parameters regarding the use of federal funds to help improve struggling schools, does not address key disparities in opportunity such as access to high-quality college preparatory curricula, restricts the federal government from protecting disadvantaged students, does not address poor quality tests, and fails to advance the current movement toward college- and career-ready standards. It is also a rollback in resources. Schools, districts and states need adequate resources to address the needs of students, particularly as we ratchet up the momentum toward college and career readiness for all students.

As a result, the bill would thrust us back to an earlier time when states could choose to ignore the needs of children of color, low-income students, ELLs, and students with disabilities. The results, for these groups of students and for our nation as a whole, were devastating.

States can do better and the federal government should ensure they do so. Federal funding must be fairly distributed and it must be attached to firm, ambitious, and unequivocal demands for improvements in achievement, high school graduation rates, and gap closing. We know that states, school districts, and schools need a new law. However, the Student Success Act guts hard-won gains in the effort to ensure that all students — especially those who need the most help — get a high-quality education.

For additional information please contact Dianne Piche at Piche@civilrights.org or Kate Tromble at KTromble@edtrust.org.

The Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights

The Education Trust

National Center for Learning Disabilities

Center for American Progress Action Fund

League of United Latin American Citizens (LULAC)

The New Teacher Project

Children's Defense Fund

Democrats for Education Reform

Mental Health America

National Women's Law Center

National Education Association

Gay, Lesbian & Straight Education Network (GLSEN)

American Federation of Teachers