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April 13, 2015

The Honorable Lamar Alexander
Chairman
Committee on Health, Education,
Labor and Pensions
United States Senate
428 Senate Dirksen Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Patty Murray
Ranking Member
Committee on Health, Education,
Labor and Pensions
United States Senate
428 Senate Dirksen Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Our Mission
Working with and
Through our State
Associations, NSBA
Advocates for Equity
and Excellence in
Public Education
through School Board
Leadership

Re: *Every Child Achieves Act of 2015*

Office of Advocacy

Dear Chairman Alexander and Ranking Member Murray:

John D. Tuttle
President

The National School Boards Association (NSBA), representing more than 90,000 local school board members across the nation, working with and through our state associations, applauds the Committee's bipartisan effort to modernize the *Elementary and Secondary Education Act* (ESEA). As you know, school board members throughout the country are deeply committed to a comprehensive, strategic modernization of ESEA that provides school districts the flexibility they need to successfully address the educational challenges faced in their local communities.

Thomas J. Gentzel
Executive Director

Lucy Gettman
Deputy Associate Executive
Director

Tomorrow's legislative mark-up of the bipartisan *Every Child Achieves Act* (ECAA) is progress toward that end.

Local Governance: The ECAA acknowledges and reaffirms local-level decision making in public education. For example, the bipartisan agreement prohibits the federal government from mandating, incentivizing or conditioning receipt of education funds on the adoption of specific curricula, standards, assessments or programs of instruction (Section 9527). This provision is consistent with NSBA's recommended language in H.R. 5.

Additionally, the *Every Child Achieves Act* affords greater autonomy in the development of state education plans and supports the continued use of disaggregated data, which enables districts to pinpoint achievement gaps, implement targeted solutions, and develop effective benchmarks for progress. Each school district is unique; therefore, decisions addressing specific needs, such as specialized curriculum, after-school enrichment, parental involvement and community support are best made at the local-level.

NSBA supports other aspects of the bill, including the elimination of sanctions and their unintended, yet significant consequences, as well as the provisions allowing more options for testing and assessments. The bill's provisions to provide support to our school districts and states for the design of evidence-based interventions for low-performing schools will help accommodate the targeted assistance that is needed to address specific deficiencies and local needs.

Title I and Maintenance of Effort: We are pleased that the bipartisan *Every Child Achieves Act* does not include provisions for Title I portability and does include maintenance of effort (MOE) provisions to help sustain critical investments in elementary and secondary education. The return on this shared investment in our students is significant. For each student who graduates from high school, the U.S economy realizes an additional \$260,000 in earnings, taxes and productivity over his or her working lifetime compared to a student who does not graduate, according to NSBA's Center for Public Education.

Authorized Funding: NSBA seeks a modernized version of ESEA that is fully supported by federal investments in Title I, which is the cornerstone of the law and has been underfunded for decades. Approximately 11.3 million students are educated through Title I programs at roughly 90 percent of the 14,000 school districts across the nation. The unmet funding need for Title I grants exceeds \$30 billion, according to the Committee for Education Funding. NSBA welcomes the ongoing conversation about authorization for appropriations for Title I grants for disadvantaged students and other ESEA programs for each of fiscal years 2016 - 2021.

In closing, I strongly urge you to oppose any proposals supporting vouchers or tuition tax credits to non-public schools during tomorrow's mark-up and throughout the remainder of the legislative process to modernize ESEA. We look forward to our continued effort working with you, your staff and your colleagues in the House of Representatives in achieving an updated law that provides the resources, guidance and flexibility needed to ensure our public school students receive the highest quality education they deserve.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Thomas J. Gentzel". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, stylized initial 'T'.

Thomas J. Gentzel
Executive Director