

As Congress Acts on ESEA, We Must Continue Progress in Connecticut

In recent years, Connecticut's leaders have taken some much-needed steps towards ensuring every child gets a high-quality public education. As Congress takes up the latest iteration of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA), a bipartisan bill named the "Every Student Succeeds Act" that would repeal some provisions in 'No Child Left Behind,' we urge the state to continue progress on the policies that can push Connecticut closer to education equity.

ESEA has been long overdue for a rewrite. It was enacted 50 years ago to protect the needs of America's most vulnerable children and ensure their fundamental right to a high-quality public education. Decades later, we have only recently begun to pave a road that leads to high-quality schools, classrooms and systems that support our nation's dedicated educators and ensures that all students gain the skills and knowledge they need to be successful. We must continue that progress.

Our state has shown real leadership in putting in place policies designed to make certain that every child, in every school, can succeed. We know that our teachers and administrators are working diligently to successfully implement those policies at the school and district levels.

Despite a difficult state budget and attempts to undo progress, Connecticut and its educators have maintained a commitment to high academic standards and effective assessments to measure progress of students towards those standards, to a culture of continuous improvement, and to a sensible accountability system for student outcomes and academic growth. In the past few years, our groups have come together to support these efforts.

With the new Every Child Succeeds Act, states will have more flexibility to determine policies on accountability and intervention in our lowest performing schools. Our six organizations join together to urge Connecticut's leaders to use this flexibility to build upon and accelerate the progress that is already underway in our schools.

The flexibility proposed in this legislation gives us the opportunity to revise policies where necessary, initiate new policies where appropriate and continue the work we've begun.

Connecticut must continue to push for innovative programs and policies to help prepare our students for an increasingly complex and competitive future. We must continue to provide performance evaluations and support for teachers and principals based, in part, on student achievement growth. We must intervene in and support our lowest-performing schools. And we must continue to implement high college and career-ready standards and effective assessments that measure how well all students are progressing towards those standards.

The Every Student Succeeds Act allows us the opportunity to closely examine what is working, learn what is not, and make the necessary improvements to address any problem that stands in the way of progress. We welcome the opportunity its re-authorization gives us to improve our education system and re-commit to progress.

No matter what happens with this federal law, we cannot compromise our children's futures and must deliver on the promise of great public schools for all Connecticut students. They deserve nothing less.

Jennifer Alexander, CEO
Connecticut Coalition for Achievement Now

Joseph Brennan, President & CEO
Connecticut Business and Industry Association

Joseph Cirsuolo, Executive Director
Connecticut Association of Public School Superintendents

Patrice McCarthy, Deputy Director and General Counsel
Connecticut Association of Boards of Education

Karissa Niehoff, Executive Director
Connecticut Association of Schools

Robert Rader, Executive Director
Connecticut Association of Boards of Education

Jeffrey Villar, Executive Director
Connecticut Council for Education Reform