



AMERICA'S JOURNEY FOR JUSTICE

Legislative Advocacy Day

September 16, 2015

ALABAMA
GEORGIA
SOUTH CAROLINA
NORTH CAROLINA
VIRGINIA
WASHINGTON, DC

Support a reauthorization of the *Elementary and Secondary Education Act* which provides full educational opportunities for all American children

- The Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) is considered by many to be a key piece of civil rights legislation: the goal of the original 1965 law was to provide a high quality public education to all American children.
- To ensure equal opportunity in education for all children, any reauthorization of the ESEA must: 1. provide a robust, meaningful federal role in education; 2. strengthen accountability for student outcomes; 3. provide additional data on student groups; and 4. address current disparities in resources between schools and school districts.
- We should not squander this opportunity to provide a better public education to every American child, regardless of his or her race, ethnicity, gender, disability, socioeconomic status, indigenous language, or where they live.
- On July 8, 2015, the U.S. House of Representatives passed H.R. 5, “Student Success Act,” or the reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA). On July 16, 2015, the U.S. Senate passed S. 1177, the “Student Success Act,” which is its version of the ESEA reauthorization. Because the two versions of the ESEA reauthorization differ so much, the differences must now be hammered out by a “conference committee,” which is comprised of representatives from both Chambers. Their charge is to develop one final bill, which then must pass the House and Senate before going to President Obama for his signature.

We urge you to do everything possible to support a strong reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA), which is now in the hands of a conference committee. We should not squander this opportunity to provide a better public education to every American child, regardless of his or her race, ethnicity, gender, disability, socioeconomic status, indigenous language, or where they live.

Specifically, we support the inclusion of four basic elements in any final draft to ensure that the law is as strong as it can be and that it helps as many of our children as possible. These four elements are:

- **Accountability:** States must be required to identify schools where all students or groups of students are not meeting goals and to intervene in ways that raise achievement for students not meeting state standards;
- **Transparency:** It is critical that states transparently report on student groups in order to understand how all of our students are doing and what their needs might be;
- **Resource Equity:** States must be able to and required to intervene to remedy disparities in access to resources between school districts and that the comparability loophole be closed; and
- **A strong Federal Role:** The U.S. Secretary of Education must have sufficient authority to ensure the law is appropriately implemented and the most vulnerable students are protected.

It is our hope that you will do all that you can to ensure that these four basic elements are included in a final bill which is produced by the conference committee for consideration by the full House and Senate. Please contact us in the very near future to let me know what you are doing to protect America's students' rights and what more we can do to help.

Sincerely,

(name #1)

(address #1)

(name #2)

(address #2)

(name #3)

(address #3)

(name #4)

(address #4)

(name #5)

(address #5)

(name #6)

(address #6)

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Support expansion of Pell grant program eligibility and maximum amount

- A college degree dramatically increases employment and wages. Young adults with only a high school diploma are more than two and a half times as likely to be unemployed, and earn three-fifths as much as those with at least a bachelor's degree.
- Pell grants make higher education accessible to groups which have historically been shut out of colleges and universities, including racial and ethnic minority American students: more than 60% of African-American undergraduates and more than half of Hispanic undergraduates rely on Pell Grants to attend school. All in all, more than one-third of all undergraduate students received a Pell grant for the 2013-2014 school year.
- Pell Grants are critically important in ensuring access to postsecondary education for low- and middle-income students.
- Specific positive amendments to the Pell Grant program would:
 - Allow students to use them year-around;
 - Make them available to incarcerated individuals;
 - Waive the six-year lifetime Pell Grant eligibility limit when a student's school closes due to accusations of fraud or other misconduct;
 - Increase the maximum amount of a Pell grant

We strongly support a strong Pell grant program. Pell Grants are critically important in ensuring access to postsecondary education for low- and middle-income students. Given the increasing importance of a college education, as well as the rapidly increasing cost, I strongly urge you to resist any move to further reduce funding for the program or to place additional restrictions on who can receive the funding.

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- Make them available to incarcerated individuals;
- Waive the six-year lifetime Pell Grant eligibility limit when a student's school closes due to accusations of fraud or other misconduct;
- Increase the maximum amount of a Pell grant

Given the importance of the Pell grant program, we strongly urge you to resist any additional cuts in funding for the program or additional restrictions on who can apply for Pell grants. Please contact us in the very near future to let us know of your position on this important program and to let us know what more I can do to advocate for it.

Sincerely,

(name #1)

(address #1)

(name #2)

(address #2)

(name #3)

(address #3)

(name #4)

(address #4)

(name #5)

(address #5)

(name #6))

(address #6)