

## The Student Success Act Takes Away Resources from Students Who Need Them the Most

Next week, the House of Representatives is expected to vote on the Student Success Act (H.R. 5), a reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act.

Help us oppose H.R. 5, which walks away from the commitment our nation made 50 years ago to help *all* our country's children succeed in school.

The Elementary and Secondary Education Act was intended to provide federal education resources to public schools to help level the playing field for targeted populations of disadvantaged students—and it has been doing so for more than 50 years. That commitment is even more important now, in the aftermath of the Great Recession; today, half the students we serve in public schools live in poverty. The proposed Student Success Act radically departs from ESEA's original intent, changing the focus from closing achievement gaps to purposes not related to improving the academic achievement of disadvantaged students. Helping needy students gain access to a high-quality public education is a commitment and a responsibility that must be sustained.

***The Student Success Act eliminates a targeted funding stream to assist English language learners, and would allow states and school districts to redirect funds away from the specific populations of students they were intended to assist.*** For example, under the bill, money for English language learners or low-income students could be redirected to programs serving entirely different populations. In a period of sequestration, when key programs—including early childhood education—are being cut, the number of children living in poverty has grown (more than 50 percent of the nation's children live in or near poverty) and the number of English language learners in our schools is increasing. The preK-12 ELL student population today is 5 million (11 percent of all students enrolled). Now is not the time to dilute the limited resources available to at-risk populations.

Compounding this potential loss of funding for English language learners, the bill also eliminates maintenance-of-effort requirements, essentially letting states

off the hook for their share of funding K-12 education and allowing them to reduce funding for school districts without any consequences. This will serve to worsen an already bleak outlook facing many districts that are still reeling from recent state and local budget cuts, and a decline in federal funding coupled with reductions resulting from sequestration.

The bill further dilutes resources from the schools and students who need them most by including language that would make Title I funding “portable”—changing the formula that is used to determine how much Title I funding each district and school receives by disregarding the percentage of students in poverty in a particular district or school. The portability provision would undermine Title I's fundamental purpose of assisting public schools with high concentrations of disadvantaged and high-needs students, and serve as a steppingstone to private school vouchers. A recent study from the Center for American Progress found that portability ignores the fact that concentrated poverty has a significant impact on students “beyond their own economic circumstances.” It also found that portability greatly weakens the ability of the Title I program to have the greatest possible effect. The study found that districts with high concentrations of poverty could lose an average of about \$85 per student, while the most affluent districts could gain, on average, \$290 per student.

While undermining the financial resources necessary to help all students succeed, the Student Success Act does not measure and document the provision of core resources, which combined with utilizing all annual data could be a strong tool to support teaching and learning and ensure students don't once again become invisible, as they did under No Child Left Behind and its obsession with high-stakes testing.

The upcoming reauthorization offers a great opportunity to fix current law and put in place meaningful changes that will enable all children to receive the high-quality education they deserve. Help us oppose the Student Success Act so that a reauthorization helps *all* our students succeed.