

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20510

November 10, 2015

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

The Honorable John Kline
Chairman
Committee on Education and the Workforce U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

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

The Honorable Bobby Scott
Ranking Member
Committee on Education and the Workforce U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Alexander, Ranking Member Murray, Chairman Kline, and Ranking Member Scott:

We write to encourage the conference committee to move promptly to reauthorize the Elementary and Secondary Education Act. Further, as you proceed with discussions to reauthorize this important legislation, we strongly urge you to maintain in the final conference package an important provision included in the Every Child Achieves Act (S. 1177). This provision would help increase high school graduation rates across the country by supporting high schools serving a significant number of students from low-income families. We appreciate your consideration of this request.

This Title I provision in S. 1177 allows more high-need middle schools and high schools to be included in state accountability and support systems and become eligible for federal dollars. Specifically, the provision allows states to include middle schools and high schools that have a poverty rate of 40 percent or above in state accountability systems. In addition, the provision allows such high poverty high schools to be eligible for school improvement funding. As you develop a final conference agreement, we encourage you to build on this provision and eliminate the requirement for secondary schools to receive Title I funds in order to be included in state accountability systems.

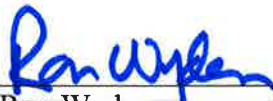
Currently, many low-performing high schools serving a significant number of students from low-income families are not eligible for, and do not receive, Title I funding. Nationally, there are

more than 2,000 high schools with a poverty rate of 40 percent or above that are not classified as eligible for Title I. Similarly, there are 5,001 high schools nationally with this level of poverty that do not receive Title I funding (even if they are eligible to do so). Excluding these high schools from state accountability systems and from federal school improvement funding leaves low-income students at further risk of underachieving and contributes to the alarmingly high drop-out rates among traditionally underserved students across the country.

This Title I provision allows states and school districts to determine how best to use school improvement funding while ensuring that schools serving a significant number of students from low-income families are not left out from this very important federal funding stream. We believe that this provision should be maintained in the final conference package.

We hope you will agree that improving graduation rates is a worthy investment that ought to be prioritized in any reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act.

Thank you for your consideration of this request.



Ron Wyden
United States Senator



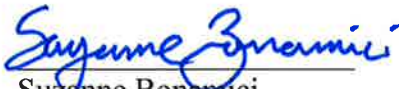
Jeffrey A. Merkley
United States Senator



Earl Blumenauer
Member of Congress



Kurt Schrader
Member of Congress



Suzanne Bonamici
Member of Congress



Peter DeFazio
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