



**CONSORTIUM FOR CITIZENS
WITH DISABILITIES**

October 18, 2011

The Honorable Tom Harkin
Chairman
Health, Education, Labor and
Pensions Committee
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Mike Enzi
Ranking Member
Health Education, Labor and
Pensions Committee
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Harkin and Ranking Member Enzi:

The undersigned members of the Consortium for Citizens with Disabilities Education Task Force write to comment on your draft Elementary and Secondary Education Reauthorization Act. Thank you for your leadership on the reauthorization of our nation's education law.

You have taken an important step in introducing a bill that includes students with disabilities in many meaningful ways. Thank you for the provisions that focus on:

- college and career ready standards for all students
- expanded and more accessible state and school district report cards
- recognition of the important role that parents play in the education of their children through the parent and family engagement plan;
- promotion of multi-tiered systems of supports, positive behavior intervention system and universal design for learning; and
- strengthened standards and assessment requirements that ensure children are appropriately assessed in reading and math.

There is great opportunity in these policies to help ensure that more students achieve their full potential.

We do, however, want to express our serious concern about the bill's requirements to only focus and require instructional intervention, support and accountability on the lowest performing public schools and schools with the largest achievement gaps and lowest graduation rates. We concur that concentration on these schools is certainly needed. At the same time, there is an on-going need for attention and instructional intervention for students with disabilities who are not clustered in these schools. One of the most positive aspects of the last ten years has been the attention States, school districts and schools have placed on the academic achievement and graduation rates of students with disabilities. We now have

evidence that students with disabilities can achieve at academic levels on par with their non-disabled peers. We believe that all students with disabilities, not just those who are enrolled in the bottom 5 percent of schools, must continue to have access to the supports and instructional interventions outlined in the Elementary and Secondary Education Act.

Your long advocacy to benefit and serve students with disabilities is unmatched and has long made a significant difference for so many. We urge you to reconsider the focus on the lowest performing schools so that all students with disabilities can leave high school with the skills to be career and college ready. We look forward to working with you to address our concerns in this bill as the process moves forward.

Sincerely,

American Counseling Association
Association of University Centers on Disabilities
Autism National Committee
Bazelon Center on Mental Health Law
Children and Adults with Attention Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder
Council for Learning Disabilities
Council of Parent Advocates and Attorneys
Disability Rights Education and Defense Fund
Easter Seals
Epilepsy Foundation
Higher Education Consortium for Special Education
Learning Disabilities Association of America
Mental Health America
National Alliance on Mental Illness
National Association of Councils on Developmental Disabilities
National Association of School Psychologists
National Center for Learning Disabilities
National Council on Independent Living
National Disability Rights Network
National Down Syndrome Congress
National Down Syndrome Society
National PTA
School Social Work Association of America
Teacher Education Division of the Council for Exceptional Children
The Advocacy Institute
The Arc of the United States
Urban Special Education Leadership Collaborative

Cc: members of the Senate Health, Education, Labor and Pensions Committee

The Consortium for Citizens with Disabilities is a coalition of nearly 100 national consumer, advocacy, provider and professional organizations headquartered in Washington, D.C. Since 1973, the CCD has advocated on behalf of people of all ages with physical and mental disabilities and their families. CCD has worked to achieve federal legislation and regulations that assure that the 54 million children and adults with disabilities are fully integrated into the mainstream of society. For additional information, please contact:

Katy Beh Neas, Easter Seals

202.347.3066

kneas@easterseals.com

Laura Kaloi, National Center on Learning Disabilities

703.476.4894

lkaloi@ncld.org

Cindy Smith, National Disability Rights Network

202.408.9514

cindy.smith@ndrn.org