



**CONSORTIUM FOR CITIZENS
WITH DISABILITIES**

May 18, 2011

Chairman Tom Harkin
Honorable Barbara Mikulski
Honorable Jeff Bingaman
Honorable Patty Murray
Honorable Bernard Sanders
Honorable Kay Hagan
Honorable Jeff Merkley
Honorable Al Franken
Honorable Michael Bennet
Honorable Sheldon Whitehouse
Honorable Richard Blumenthal

Ranking Member Enzi
Honorable Lamar Alexander
Honorable Richard Burr
Honorable Johnny Isakson
Honorable Rand Paul
Honorable Orrin Hatch
Honorable John McCain
Honorable Pat Roberts
Honorable Lisa Murkowski
Honorable Mark Kirk

Dear Senators:

We write on behalf of the Education Task Force of the Consortium for Citizens with Disabilities to share our concern regarding subgroup accountability in the reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA). We urge you to not limit accountability for student achievement to only the lowest performing schools. Furthermore we believe that States and school districts should intervene in schools in which subgroups of students, including students with disabilities, are not meeting state standards.

As you know, students with disabilities have made considerable gains under the current focus of ESEA on all schools and all subgroups. These improvements have come in participation rates, achievement on grade level reading and math assessments and more generally in having increased access to the general curriculum and higher expectations for student achievement. We believe these gains are due largely to the requirement that the participation and proficiency of all subgroups be measured, reported, and used for the planning of interventions needed for improvement.

Students with disabilities may be most at risk if revisions to the law do not ensure all schools are accountable for student achievement at the subgroup level and receive extra resources and attention when they fail to produce progress. While the reauthorization of ESEA should explore ways to grant appropriate flexibility to ensure schools can best meet local needs, this flexibility should not eliminate the current focus of ESEA's accountability framework on all schools and all subgroups or eliminate targeted help to schools that need it. To do so ignores the real challenge facing our education systems - that too many schools are not providing an educational experience that enables all students with disabilities to make academic gains.

Without a focus on all subgroups in all schools within ESEA, the progress made in furthering the academic achievement of students with disabilities could be lost. We ask that you please support policies that reinforce that all schools be held accountable for the achievement of all subgroups. States and school districts must intervene in all schools in which subgroups of students, including students with disabilities, are not meeting state standards.

We look forward to working closely with you as the discussion moves forward.

Sincerely,

American Counseling Association
American Dance Therapy Association
American Foundation for the Blind
Association of University Centers on Disabilities
Autism National Committee
Council of Parent Attorneys and Advocates
Council for Exceptional Children
Disability Rights Education and Defense Fund
Easter Seals
Higher Education Consortium for Special Education
Learning Disabilities Association of America
National Association of School Psychologists
National Association of State Directors of Special Education
National Center for Learning Disabilities
National Disability Rights Network
National Down Syndrome Congress
National Down Syndrome Society
Religious Action Center of Reform Judaism
Teacher Education Division of the Council for Exceptional Children
The Advocacy Institute
The Arc
Tourette Syndrome Association

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:

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