

September 3, 2015

The Honorable Lamar Alexander  
United States Senate  
455 Dirksen Senate Office Building  
Washington DC 20510

The Honorable John Kline  
United States House of Representatives  
2439 Rayburn House Office Building  
Washington DC 20510

The Honorable Patty Murray  
United States Senate  
154 Russell Senate Office Building  
Washington DC 20510

The Honorable Bobby Scott  
United States House of Representatives  
1201 Longworth House Office Building  
Washington DC 20510

CC: ESEA Conferees

Senator Alexander, Senator Murray, Representative Kline, Representative Scott,

The Data Quality Campaign applauds the U.S. Senate and the U.S. House for their efforts to promote effective data use in the reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA). Education data can be an incredibly powerful tool to support student success and to help improve education outcomes while reducing burden, increasing efficiency, and improving transparency. Your leadership can help change the role of data from one centered on compliance reporting and accountability to one of empowering everyone—from parents to policymakers—with the information needed to get the results our children and nation deserve. As you work to create the final version of this historic piece of legislation, we encourage you to focus on ways to use education data to improve student learning.

***Do Not Allow Parental Opt-Out from Statewide Assessments.*** *Accurate and complete education data empower states and communities to understand student growth, make good decisions, and ensure local accountability; parental opt-out compromises the information needed for these activities and leaves families, educators, and policymakers in the dark.* In many communities, those who stand to benefit most from education data—parents and educators—are not receiving useful information about their children’s growth. Rather than turning back the clock on No Child Left Behind’s legacy of gathering valuable information by allowing opt-out to destroy the quality of education data available, prioritize instead getting parents and teachers the meaningful information they deserve.

***Equip School Leaders, Teachers, and other Personnel to Effectively Use Data to Improve Teaching and Learning*** *Effective data use makes an incredible difference for students in the classroom and in decision-making at the school, district, and state levels.*

We strongly support the general Senate and House professional development provisions focused on building the data literacy and capacity of school leaders and educators. We also support the Senate Innovative Technology Expands Children’s Horizons Act program that specifically recognizes this need, by dedicating more than half of formula program funds to well-designed technology and data use focused professional development. This focus complements the long-standing federal commitment and investment in building state longitudinal data systems and federal accountability and data transparency requirements. We urge you to maintain these important capacity building provisions in the conference report.

***Create a Student Privacy Policy Committee.*** *The Hatch-Markey amendment to create a Student Data Privacy Policy Committee will provide the thoughtful insight and guidance that states and districts need to safeguard student data as a part of its effective use.*

Over the last two years, nearly every state has considered legislation designed to safeguard student data privacy. As states work to implement robust privacy protections, they can benefit greatly from additional guidance. While the federal government plays a critical role in building the foundation for state privacy legislation and policies, ESEA reauthorization is not the right mechanism to amend the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA). A Student Privacy Policy Committee with the expertise and time to examine the complex issues around protecting student data privacy and parental rights can develop the recommendations needed to move the field forward in a constructive way.

***Require States to Include Postsecondary Success Data in Report Cards.*** *The Capito-Durbin amendment requiring states to include additional postsecondary indicators in their school report cards will give families, educators, and policymakers the information they need to understand how well their schools prepare students for success.*

Adding post-secondary enrollment data, and, as possible, post-secondary remediation data to existing school report cards will ensure that students, parents, educators, and policymakers can see how well their schools are preparing students to enter and succeed in postsecondary programs and how to improve student outcomes after graduation.

We want to express our appreciation and strong support for your ongoing efforts to protect our students' privacy and to champion the effective use of education data to support students and families. When students, parents, educators, and policymakers have the right information to make decisions, students achieve their best.

Sincerely,



Paige Kowalski  
Vice President for Policy and Advocacy  
Data Quality Campaign