

February 7, 2012

The Honorable John Kline (R-MN)
United States House of Representatives
2181 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

RE: Student Success Act and Encouraging Innovation and Effective Teachers Act

Dear Chairman Kline:

On behalf of the nation's 50 million elementary and secondary students, the Coalition for Teaching Quality would like to voice our concerns with provisions regarding teacher quality and equitable distribution of teachers in the 'Student Success Act' and the 'Encouraging Innovation and Effective Teachers Act.' As a coalition of 86 organizations concerned with promoting educational quality and equity, particularly for students who have traditionally been least well served by our public education system, we are deeply committed to the development of well-prepared and effective teachers for all communities, and to the equitable distribution of these teachers to all students. Unfortunately, the Student Success Act and the Encouraging Innovation and Effective Teachers Act represent a significant step backward from these goals.

First, these bills eliminate all baseline preparation standards for teachers, instead focusing solely on measuring teacher effectiveness once teachers are already in the classroom. We believe policy must enhance and improve current "highly qualified teacher" provisions requiring all teachers to be fully certified by their state and have demonstrated competency in their subject matter, not eliminate this requirement altogether. A wealth of research shows that high need students are most likely to be taught by teachers who have not completed their training, have not demonstrated competency in their subject matter, and are inexperienced. These bills will do nothing to change this reality. Even if well-proven strategies to evaluate teacher effectiveness were widely available, which is not now the case, these bills fail to recognize that teacher effectiveness cannot be measured until a teacher has actually taught. All students—especially low-income students, students of color, students with disabilities, English language learners, and students from high-need rural communities—deserve teachers who are fully-prepared on their first day in the classroom *and* who prove themselves effective once there.

Second, these bills lack any significant equity protections, particularly with respect to ensuring equal access to fully-prepared and effective teachers for our nation's most vulnerable students. The proposals eliminate existing requirements that low-income and minority students not be disproportionately taught by teachers who are unqualified, inexperienced, or teaching out of field. More generally, by failing to address comparability requirements, the proposals fail to ensure that resources—including fully-prepared and effective teachers—are equitably distributed within school districts.

Finally, these bills move away from a focus on transparency, particularly with respect to providing parents with information about the background qualifications and training of their child's teachers. Whereas current law requires districts to inform parents when their child is taught for four or more weeks by a teacher who is not "highly qualified," your proposal eliminates this required disclosure. In so doing, it eliminates parents' access to one piece of information that is critical to allowing them to hold their schools accountable for providing students with the resources they need to learn. Like you, we continue to support the ESEA reauthorization process and hope that ESEA will be reauthorized before the end of this year. In our ongoing meetings regarding reauthorization with

Congressional offices, we continue to advocate for the inclusion of the attached principles on fully-prepared, well-supported, and effective teachers for all students in any reauthorization bill.

We also continue to support other legislation that reflects our coalition's principles, such as H.R. 2902 by Representative Judy Chu (D-CA), which strengthens high-quality pathways into teaching, increases the supply of fully-prepared teachers who have made a long-term commitment to serving in high-need communities, and supports induction and retention programs in order to promote a stable learning environment for educators and students. As another mechanism to improve teacher quality and increase access to effective teachers, we also support S. 1716 by Senator Bernard Sanders (I-VT). S. 1716 not only defines a "highly qualified teacher" as someone who has fully completed a State-approved traditional or alternative teacher preparation program, but also changes state plans to include a strategy for recruitment, support, retention, and equitable distribution of highly qualified and effective teachers.

The nation's growth and the strength of our democracy are dependent on the educational success of our students. The Coalition for Teaching Quality remains committed to working in partnership with the House Committee on Education and the Workforce to ensure students in all communities have access to fully-prepared, well-supported, and effective teachers.

Sincerely,

Members of the Coalition for Teaching Quality (list attached)

cc: Members, U.S. House Committee on Education and the Workforce
U.S. Secretary of Education Arne Duncan

Coalition for Teaching Quality (86 members)

National Organizations

Alliance for Multilingual Multicultural Education	Learning Disabilities Association of America
American Council on Education	Movement Strategy Center
American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education	NAACP
American Association of People with Disabilities	National Alliance of Black School Educators
American Association of State Colleges and Universities	National Association of School Psychologists
American Council for School Social Work	National Association of State Directors of Special Education
Association of University Centers on Disabilities	National Center for Learning Disabilities
ASPIRA Association	National Consortium on Deaf-Blindness
Autistic Self Advocacy Network	National Council for Educating Black Children
Autism National Committee	National Council of Teachers of English
Center for Teaching Quality	National Council of Teachers of Mathematics
Citizens for Effective Schools	National Disability Rights Network
Communities for Excellent Public Schools	National Down Syndrome Congress
Council for Exceptional Children	National Down Syndrome Society
Council of Parent Attorneys and Advocates	National Education Association
Disability Policy Collaboration, A Partnership of The Arc and UCP	National Indian Education Association
Disability Rights Education and Defense Fund Inc	National Latino Education Research & Policy Project
Easter Seals	National PTA
Education Law Center	National Urban League
FairTest, The National Center for Fair & Open Testing	League of United Latin American Citizens
First Focus Campaign for Children	Parents Across America
Gamaliel Foundation	Partnership for 21 st Century Skills
Helen Keller National Center	Public Advocates Inc.
Higher Education Consortium for Special Education	Public Education Network
Knowledge Alliance	Rural School and Community Trust
Latino Elected and Appointed Officials National Taskforce on Education	School Social Work Association of America
Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights Under Law	South East Asia Resource Action Center
League of United Latin American Citizens	TASH - Equity, Opportunity, and Inclusion for People with Disabilities
	Teacher Education Division of the Council for Exceptional Children
	Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages International, Inc.
	United Church of Christ Justice & Witness Ministries

State and Local Organizations

Action Now – Illinois	Delawareans for Social and Economic Justice
Action Now– North Carolina	Grow Your Own Illinois
ACTION United	Inner City Struggle
Alliance of Californians for Community Empowerment (ACCE)	Justice Matters
Arkansas Community Organizations	Legal Advocates for Children and Youth
Bay Area Parent Leadership Action Network	Parent-U-Turn
Brighton Park Neighborhood Council – Chicago	Parents for Unity
California Association for Bilingual Education	RYSE Center
Californians for Justice	San Francisco Teacher Residency
Californians Together	Texas Association of Chicanos in Higher Education
California Latino School Boards Association	Youth On Board – Somerville, MA
Campaign for Quality Education	Youth Together
Center for the Future of Teaching and Learning	
Coalition for Educational Justice	