

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

February 26, 2015

The Honorable John Kline
Chairman
Committee on Education and the Workforce
2181 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Todd Rokita
Chairman
Subcommittee on Early Childhood,
Elementary and Secondary Education
Committee on Education and the Workforce
2181 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 2051

Re: Opposition to H.R. 5

Dear Chairman Kline and Chairman Rokita:

As Congress considers H.R. 5 on the House floor this week, we, the Education Task Force Co-chairs and Chairwoman of the Congressional Hispanic Caucus (CHC), write to express our strong opposition to this misguided legislation. While we believe that Congress must work to improve our nation's public schools in order to prepare *all* students for college and careers, we are concerned that H.R. 5 seeks to dismantle the federal government's historic role in providing for the educational needs of our nation's most vulnerable student populations. To be clear, the Republican bill eliminates vitally important civil rights and equity protections enacted by the ESEA that safeguard equal educational opportunity for children regardless of race, ethnicity, language, country of origin, income or disability.

First and foremost, H.R. 5 weakens federal accountability in public education. In a rapidly changing and globally competitive workforce, the Republican bill moves away from requiring states to set high standards to graduate students who are college and career ready. With regard to English Learners and students with disabilities, the bill eliminates requirements that schools or districts improve the education of English Learners each year and allows students with disabilities to be taught to separate and lower standards. To make matters worse, the bill eliminates requirements that schools or districts take action when students struggle to achieve at grade-level.

Equally troubling are the Republican bill's block granting provisions. Under H.R. 5, a number of vitally important federal programs to Latino students and English Learners, including funding for English Learners and migrant students, are block granted. Unfortunately, the bill allows targeted funding for these student populations to be spent elsewhere. According to the U.S. Department of Education, English Learner students constitute nine percent of all public school students and are enrolled in nearly three out of four public schools.¹ Under Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 (Title VI) and the Equal Opportunities Act of 1974 (EEOA), public schools must ensure that EL

¹ U.S. Department of Education, Ensuring English Learner Students Can Participate Meaningfully and Equally in Educational Programs. (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education, 2015) 1.

students can participate meaningfully and equally in educational programs.² The block granting provisions in H.R. 5 would be devastating to the growing numbers of English Learners and other special populations in our nation's public schools.

H.R. 5 fails to provide schools with the resources they need to prepare all students for college and careers. Although greater numbers of economically disadvantaged children are entering our nation's schools, H.R. 5 implements severe cuts in education funding, freezing funding at FY 2015 levels for six years. Importantly, the Republican bill eliminates the maintenance of effort requirement and allows states to redirect Title I funds away from high concentrations of poverty and siphon monies to low-poverty schools, cutting billions from districts that educate large numbers of Latino students, English Learners, and other disadvantaged students.

Simply put, the *Student Success Act*, rolls back civil rights gains, makes America less competitive, and absolves federal responsibility for the educational achievement of *all* children. Today, Latino children represent approximately one in four public school students, and their numbers are projected to grow over the next decade.³ Given the increasing diversity and needs of our public schools, we believe that this is no time to turn our backs on our nation's children, especially children and youth who need our help the most. For these reasons, we strongly oppose H.R. 5.

Alternatively, we strongly support Ranking Member Bobby Scott's Democratic Substitute, as it reflects an understanding of the many challenges facing our nation's children and youth, teachers, and principals. In our view, the Democratic Substitute sets high expectations for all students, ensures that students achieve academically, supports English Learners and disadvantaged students, provides robust funding levels, and expands access to high-quality preschool programs. These meaningful and bold improvements will enable all children to succeed in school and receive the world class education they deserve.

Sincerely,



Linda Sánchez
Chair, CHC



Raul M. Grijalva
CHC Education Task Force Co-Chair



Rubén Hinojosa
CHC Education Task Force Co-Chair

² U.S. Department of Education 1.

³ Richard Fry & Mark H. Lopez, *Hispanic Student Enrollments Reach New Highs in 2011* (Washington, DC: Pew Hispanic Center, 2012) 1.