

Raising High School Graduation Rates: Sen. Warren’s Amendment to the Every Child Achieves Act

Amendment Purpose

There are more than 1,200 high schools that do not graduate one-third or more of their students. Senator Elizabeth Warren’s (D-MA) amendment to the Every Child Achieves Act would ensure that these high schools are included within the state accountability system and make them eligible to receive funding for improvement.

Amendment Policy

- (a) This amendment would ensure that high schools with a four-year high school graduation rate at or below 67 percent are eligible for funding and receive support from the state’s accountability and improvement system under section 1114.
- (b) States have the flexibility to use a five-year, six-year, or other “extended-year” graduation rate.

Amendment Language

On page 133, between lines 13 and 14, insert the following:

“(iii) include any public high school that receives funds under this part and that has a four-year adjusted cohort graduation rate at or below 67 percent for two or more consecutive years, or an extended year adjusted cohort graduation rate at or below 67 percent (or a higher percentage determined by the State);”

Rationale

- (a) Under this amendment, high schools with graduation rates at or below 67 percent would be identified for improvement under section 1114 and eligible for school improvement funding. There are more than 1,200 high schools that do not graduate one-third or more of their students. These high schools with graduation rates at or below 67 percent enroll more than 1.1 million students. Without this amendment, these high schools may not be eligible for funding or support under the state’s accountability and improvement system.

The students attending these high schools are disproportionately students with the greatest needs. For example:¹

- 40 percent of students are African American, even though African American students make up less than 15.7 percent of the overall K–12 public school student population;
 - only 26 percent of students are white, even though white students make up 51 percent of the overall K–12 public school student population; and
 - 70 percent are students from low-income families, even though students from low-income families make up 50 percent of the overall K–12 public school student population.
- (b) This amendment gives states the flexibility to use an extended-year high school graduation rate (e.g., five-year or six-year graduation rate) in order to provide an incentive for schools to continue serving students who may take longer than four years to graduate.

¹ J. Cardichon and P. Lovell, *Below the Surface: Solving the Hidden Graduation Rate Crisis* (Washington, DC: Alliance for Excellent Education, 2015), <http://all4ed.org/reports-factsheets/belowthesurface/> (accessed April 11, 2015).