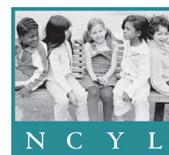
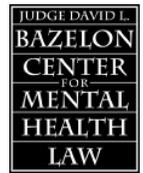


Civil Rights Statement of Support for Robust and Meaningful Federal Regulation and Oversight in ESSA



March 4, 2016

The Honorable John B. King Jr.
Acting Secretary
U.S. Department of Education
400 Maryland Avenue, SW
Washington, D.C. 20202

Dear Acting Secretary King:

On behalf of The Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights and the 54 undersigned organizations, we write to urge the U.S. Department of Education to use its full authority to ensure that state and local implementation of the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) best serves girls and boys of color, English Learners, students with disabilities, Native American students, low-income students and those who are migrant, homeless, in foster care or returning from or placed in juvenile detention, or LGBTQ. We believe that the only way for states, districts, and schools to be in compliance and consistent with the law's intent is through robust and meaningful federal regulation and oversight.

The congressional intent of the original Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) was to recognize that the federal government has a vital role in protecting the civil rights and promoting educational opportunity for all students, especially our most vulnerable students. Prior reauthorizations have honored this intent and ESSA is no different.

This new law includes serious protections for vulnerable students, and creates important leverage for parents, communities, and advocates to continue their push for equity and accountability for all students. **ESSA is clear: The department has the authority and responsibility to issue regulations and guidance, and to provide guidance and technical assistance for the implementation of the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA).**

For today's students—especially students of color, students with disabilities, English Learners, Native students, low-income students and other vulnerable students—the challenges are different than they were more than 50 years ago, but the stakes are at least as high. **Given the long history of state and local decisions shortchanging vulnerable students, the department cannot shirk from its regulatory and enforcement responsibilities to ensure that the implementation of ESSA eliminates, not perpetuates, persistent inequities in our nation's public education system.**

Our organizations stand ready to work with you and your staff, states, districts, schools, parents, and communities to implement the ESSA so that all students have the educational opportunity to truly succeed. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact Nancy Zirkin, Leadership Conference executive vice president, at zirkin@civilrights.org or Liz King, Leadership Conference director of education policy, at king@civilrights.org.

Sincerely,

The Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights
ACLU
Alliance for Excellent Education
American Association of University Women (AAUW)
American-Arab Anti-Discrimination Committee (ADC)
AUCD
Children's Advocacy Institute
Children's Defense Fund
Children's Home Society of America

Coalition for Juvenile Justice
Council of Parent Attorneys and Advocates
Democrats for Education Reform
Disability Rights Education & Defense Fund
Easter Seals
Education Law Center-PA
The Education Trust
First Focus Campaign for Children
GLSEN
Human Rights Campaign
Human Rights Project for Girls
Judge David L. Bazelon Center for Mental Health Law
Juvenile Law Center
Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights Under Law
League of United Latin American Citizens
MALDEF
NAACP
NAACP Legal Defense and Educational Fund, Inc.
National Association for the Education of Homeless Children and Youth
National Association of Councils on Developmental Disabilities
National Association of Counsel for Children
National Center for Housing and Child Welfare
National Center for Learning Disabilities
National Center for Special Education in Charter Schools
National Center for Youth Law
National Council of La Raza
The National Crittenton Foundation
National Disability Rights Network
National Down Syndrome Congress
National Indian Education Association
National Law Center on Homelessness & Poverty
National Urban League
National Women's Law Center
National Youth Advocate Program, Inc.
New Leaders
PolicyLink
Poverty & Race Research Action Council
Public Advocates
SEARAC
Southern Poverty Law Center
TASH
Teach For America
Teach Plus
TNTP
True Colors Fund
UNCF