

October 6, 2015

Honorable Chairman Lamar Alexander  
Honorable Ranking Member Patty Murray  
Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor and Pensions  
428 Dirksen Senate Office Building  
United States Senate  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Alexander and Ranking Member Murray:

On behalf of the Association of University Centers on Disabilities, I write to thank you for your ongoing leadership in developing and moving the bipartisan *Every Child Achieves Act* (S.1177).

As you enter into conference committee negotiations, we want to reiterate our strong support for the Senate bill's requirement that caps the participation of students with the most significant disabilities in Alternate Assessments based on Alternate Achievement Standards (AA-AAS) at one percent. Incidence data reflects that less than one percent of all students have the most significant cognitive disabilities (which correspond to roughly 10% of students with disabilities). Without this limitation, we fear that schools may inappropriately assign students to the alternate assessment. Data show assignment to an AA-AAS may lead to reduced access to the general curriculum and limit a student's access to earn a regular diploma. Many children with intellectual, cognitive, and other disabilities can make grade level achievement with regular assessments, particularly with appropriate accommodations, universal design for learning and full accessibility.

In addition, parents should be involved in the IEP team decision that their child will be taking an alternate assessment and should be informed of any effect that the alternate assessment may have on their child's academic preparation to earn a regular diploma. States must be provided access to and ensure progress in the general education curriculum for the grade in which the student is enrolled to ensure complete and consistent alignment with the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) and the Individualized Education Program (IEP) requirements.

Finally, AUCD urges the inclusion of a federal requirement to intervene when schools or districts determine, using the disaggregated data, that there is, or continues to be, a gap between the achievement of students with disabilities and the general populations of students. The transparency of data must be used to trigger additional resources and interventions when achievement gaps occur.

The Association of University Centers on Disabilities (AUCD) represents 67 University Centers for Excellence in Developmental Disabilities (UCEDD) and 43 Leadership Education in Neurodevelopmental Disabilities (LEND) programs. We work with thousands of schools, tens of thousands of teachers, and hundreds of thousands of students each year. On the ground, we see the positive impact for students with disabilities of good accountability and intervention policies.

Thank you for all of your hard to reauthorize this important law and your attention to these issues. AUCD looks forward to working with you to ensure that this bill is strong for all children.

Sincerely,



Andrew Imparato  
Executive Director, AUCD

1100 Wayne Avenue  
Suite 1000  
Silver Spring, MD 20910  
t: 301-588-8252  
f: 301-588-2842  
www.aucd.org

Leslie Cohen, JD  
*President*

Olivia Raynor, PhD  
*President-Elect*

Julie Anne Fodor, PhD  
*Past-President*

A. Anthony Antosh, EdD  
*Past-Past President*

Karen Edwards, MD, MPH  
*Secretary*

Harold Kleinert, EdD  
*Treasurer*

Brent Askvig, PhD  
*Member at Large*

Cynthia Ellis, MD  
*Member at Large*

Celia Feinstein, MA  
*Member at Large*

Bruce Keisling, PhD  
*Member at Large*

Philip Wilson, PhD  
*Member at Large*

Shannon Caldwell  
*Council on Community Advocacy*

Dawn Olson, BS  
*Council on Community Advocacy*

Jody Pirtle, PhD  
*Council on Technology and Innovation  
in Interdisciplinary Service*

Kelly Roberts, PhD  
*Council on Research and Evaluation*

Thomas Uno, EdS  
*Multicultural Council*

Amy Sharp, PhD  
*Community Education and  
Dissemination Council*

Michelle Schladant, PhD  
*National Training Directors Council*

Andrew J. Imparato, JD  
*Executive Director*