



**CONSORTIUM FOR CITIZENS  
WITH DISABILITIES**

February 23, 2015

The Honorable Pete Sessions  
H-312 U.S. Capitol  
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Louise Slaughter  
1627 Longworth House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Sessions and Ranking Member Slaughter,

The undersigned organizations of the Consortium for Citizens with Disabilities (CCD) Education Taskforce write to voice our significant concerns regarding potential amendments to *The Student Success Act* (H.R. 5) which would strip the bill's current requirement for states to develop and implement annual, statewide standardized assessments in reading and math. Any proposed amendment that would decimate one of the cornerstones of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) via grade span testing, thru locally designed assessments in lieu of state assessments or other onerous proposals must be stopped by your committee.

As advocates for the six million students with disabilities attending public school across the U.S., we are unequivocal in our support of a continued federal requirement for states to design and administer annual, statewide assessments in reading and math; given annually in grades 3-8 and once in high school; and, to continue to require that at least 95 percent of students participate in such assessments. In fact, while there is broad consensus that significant changes are needed to improve the ESEA, it is also widely accepted that yearly access to disaggregated data about student performance has led to greater transparency for families regarding the progress of their child with a disability; and has allowed educators, policymakers and other stakeholders to have actionable information to target interventions to close achievement gaps. Prior to 2001, many students with disabilities were not included in state assessments and therefore this information – from a systems perspective – was unavailable. Parents simply had no comparative information regarding their child's progress toward state reading and math standards.

We ask you to seriously consider the implications of amendments that will significantly reduce access to this information for parents, schools and communities. Unfortunately, we know that without the continued requirement for annual, statewide assessment, access to timely, relevant interventions that can improve student outcomes will be jeopardized and will seriously undermine the progress and limit opportunities to improve the achievement of students with disabilities. Even more concerning with such amendments is the concept of masking the performance of students with disabilities because of the way such proposals may also waive testing requirements for certain “top-performing” schools and allow those schools to assess students once during a grade span (e.g. every four years).

As you plan for and consider the amendments allowable under the rule for H.R. 5, we urge you to recognize the critically important role of annual statewide assessments in Reading and Math in exposing the achievement gap, particularly in grades 3-8 and once in high school for students with disabilities. Arming families, educators and policymakers with yearly data of student performance is a powerful lever for school and district-wide improvement, change and recognition of well-performing educational programming. The only way we can improve outcomes for students with disabilities and other at-risk student groups is if we can regularly measure their performance and transparently provide this actionable information to educators and to the public through an accountability system that matches resources to need.

Therefore, CCD urges you to reject amendments that would remove requirements for annual statewide assessment and continue to provide this important component to assuring this one layer of accountability for students who need it the most. Thank you for considering our perspective and for your work on the education issues of our day. We would be happy to provide any further information or answer any questions.

Sincerely,

ACCSES

American Foundation for the Blind

Association for University Centers on Disability

Autism National Committee

Autistic Self-Advocacy Network

Bazelon Center for Mental Health Law

Brain Injury Association of America

Conference of Educational Administrators of Schools and Programs for the Deaf

Council for Exceptional Children

Council for Learning Disabilities

Council of Parent Attorneys and Advocates

Disability Rights Education & Defense Fund

Easter Seals

Higher Education Consortium for Special Education

Institute for Educational Leadership

Lutheran Services in America Disability Network

National Association of Councils on Developmental Disabilities

National Association of State Head Injury Administrators

National Center for Learning Disabilities

National Council on Independent Living

National Disability Rights Network

National Down Syndrome Congress

National PTA

Perkins

TASH

The Advocacy Institute

The Arc

The Epilepsy Foundation

cc: The Honorable John Kline  
The Honorable Bobby Scott  
The Honorable John Boehner  
The Honorable Nancy Pelosi

The Consortium for Citizens with Disabilities is a coalition of national consumer, advocacy, provider and professional organizations headquartered in Washington, D.C. Since 1973, the CCD has advocated on behalf of people of all ages with physical and mental disabilities and their families. CCD has worked to achieve federal legislation and regulations that assure that the 54 million children and adults with disabilities are fully integrated into the mainstream of society. For additional information, please contact:

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