



The Education Trust

Closing the gaps in opportunity and achievement, pre-k through college.

April 14, 2015

Dear Chairman Alexander, Ranking Member Murray, and Senators on the Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions Committee:

Today, the Committee will take up the Every Child Achieves Act. The framework laid out by Chairman Alexander and Ranking Member Murray includes powerful provisions for transparency by requiring public reporting of per-pupil expenditures of federal, state, and local funds — including actual staff salaries — for schools, districts, and states.

We write in support of an amendment by Senator Bennet that would build on this transparency by improving the comparability provisions of Title I.

These provisions are intended to ensure that all participating districts provide all schools with an equal base of state and local resources, so that Title I funds can then buy the extra supports that low-income students need to achieve at high levels. But loopholes in the current comparability provisions allow districts to budget and account for funds in ways that shortchange high-poverty schools. The result is that instead of buying extra supports for low-income students, districts too often use Title I funds to make up for district-wrought funding gaps between high-poverty and low-poverty schools. This undermines the intent of the law and makes it a far less powerful tool to boost the achievement of low-income students.

Senator Bennet's amendment would improve on the comparability provisions by requiring districts to demonstrate that they spend at least as much per pupil in state and local funds in Title I schools as they do in non-Title I schools, and by requiring that districts count all school-level expenditures, including actual staff salaries, to demonstrate equitable funding.

The changes would help ensure that Title I funds serve their intended purpose — providing additional supports to low-income students. We urge you to adopt this important amendment.

Sincerely,

Kati Haycock
President