February 23, 2015

The Hon. Pete Sessions
Chairman
House Rules Committee
Washington, DC  20515

The Hon. Louise Slaughter
Ranking Member
House Rule Committee
Washington, DC  20515

RE: Support for Roybal-Allard/Polis Educational Technology Amendment

Dear Chairman Sessions and Ranking Member Slaughter:

The undersigned organizations — representing educators, state and local education leaders, and the high-tech industry — urge support for Reps. Roybal-Allard’s and Polis’s amendment to the Student Success Act (HR 5) that would require Title III Blended Learning grant recipients to expend at least 40% of funds received for technology professional development.

When Congress passed the No Child Left Behind Act in 2002, it voiced bipartisan support for the Enhancing Education Through Technology (EETT) program, which required that local education agencies set aside 25% of their EETT funds for professional development. Since that time, it has become apparent that for digital learning to become a reality nationwide, educators must receive ongoing, sustainable and scalable technology professional learning opportunities. According to a 2012 survey from Project Tomorrow, one-third of all educators indicated that the lack of sufficient professional development was a major obstacle to implementing technology in the classroom. Like any profession, educators must be supported to continually hone their craft to ensure students reach high academic success. The advent of digital assessments makes even more acute the importance of educator professional learning to harness data to personalize and strengthen instruction to the needs, styles and interests of students.

The priority for a program specifically focused on digital learning is even greater today than it was in 2002. Classroom technologies and high-speed connectivity are opening the door to ways of learning that were not imaginable even a few short years ago. Students have gained opportunities to collaborate, communicate and create content through blogs, wikis, videos and other forms of project-based learning; educators can choose from a wide array of digital textbooks, online resources and assessments that provide real-time feedback of student progress to personalize the learning experience; and entire classrooms can go on virtual field trips and even talk to astronauts at the International Space Station. However, without educators skilled in digital age teaching, the limitless digital educational choices will be constrained for students and educators.

For all of these reasons, we support the Roybal-Allard/Polis Educational Technology Amendment to HR 5.

Sincerely,

AASA, The School Superintendents Association
Association of Educational Service Agencies
Consortium for School Networking
Discovery Education
Gaggle.Net, Inc.
Intel
International Society for Technology in Education
National Association of Elementary School Principals
National Association of Secondary School Principals
National Education Association
National Rural Education Association
National Rural Education Advocacy Coalition
State Educational Technology Directors Association

cc. The Hon. John Kline
The Hon. Bobby Scott