March 16, 2015

The Honorable Lamar Alexander, Chairman
The Honorable Patty Murray, Ranking Member
Heath, Education, Labor & Pensions Committee
U.S. Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable John Kline, Chairman
The Honorable Bobby Scott, Ranking Member
Education and the Workforce Committee
U.S. House of House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Chairmen Alexander and Kline and Ranking Members Murray and Scott:

We, the undersigned national organizations, write to share our support for the Family Engagement in Education Act (S.622/H.R. 1194), bipartisan, bicameral legislation introduced by Senators Jack Reed (D-RI), Sheldon Whitehouse (D-RI) and Chris Coons (D-DE), and Congressmen Glenn Thompson (R-PA) and Mark DeSaulnier (D-CA).

As you know, family engagement in education improves student achievement, attendance, and behavior, and reduces the dropout rate. Family engagement is a cost-effective way to close the achievement gap; studies have shown that schools would have to spend more than $1,000 dollars per pupil to achieve the same results. Moreover, recent surveys of teachers and principals show that while teachers identify engaging parents as one of the top factors in improving education, it is also the area where they feel least prepared and least satisfied with their performance.

The Family Engagement in Education Act ensures shared responsibility between families, communities, and educators for closing the achievement gap. The proposed legislation sets forth a framework for leveraging existing federal investments in education to support schools and districts with research-based strategies that engage parents and raise student achievement, in a way that makes the most sense for each community. It also provides professional development for teachers and school leaders on how to partner with parents and turn around struggling schools.

This legislation seeks to target capacity-building and technical assistance for effective family engagement strategies where it’s needed most while encouraging state and school district flexibility to identify innovative and research-based programming that works best for individual communities. Importantly, the Family Engagement in Education Act would not authorize any new spending.

We thank you for commitment to reauthorize ESEA and prepare all students to be successful in college and career. We support the Family Engagement in Education Act as a critical step toward ensuring a sound partnership between educators and parents to improve the education of our nation’s children.
Sincerely,
National PTA
American School Counselor Association
American School Health Association (ASHA)
Healthy Teen Network
Learning Disabilities Association of America
Magnet Schools of America
National Association for Family, School and Community Engagement
National Association of Elementary School Principals (NAESP)
National Association of Secondary School Principals (NASSP)
National Association of State Directors of Special Education
National Center for Families Learning
National Coalition for Literacy
Opportunity Action
Parents as Teachers
Public Advocacy for Kids
School Social Work Association of America
Student Health Advocacy Coalition (SHAC)
United Way Worldwide