



## Committee on Education and the Workforce Democrats

Press Office: 202-226-0853

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### Remarks of Ranking Member Robert C. "Bobby" Scott (D-VA) Opposing of H.R. 5, the "*Student Success Act*"

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Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Chairman, as you know, I wrote you a letter two weeks ago asking for a series of hearings on ESEA. In my letter, I expressed my concerns about what would become your chosen process for reauthorizing ESEA. I stressed the importance of holding committee hearings with a diverse set of experts to better understand the challenges in our public education system.

All too often, our policy dialogue is driven by sound bites and slogans instead of research and evidence. These catchy slogans may poll well but they end up masking bad policy. We are faced with this today with H.R. 5.

H.R. 5 would turn back the clock on American public education. The bill abandons the fundamental principles of equity and accountability in our education system, eviscerates education funding, fails to support our educators, and leaves our children ill-prepared for success in the classroom and beyond.

H.R. 5 removes provisions that help ensure all students have access to a quality education. The Republican bill fails to provide resources sufficient to meet students' learning needs. It eliminates all state and district achievement goals, and all measures of student learning. It scraps the support for schools and districts where students make little or no progress. It fails to ensure that low-income and minority students are taught by qualified, effective teachers. It excludes evidence-based standards that keep high-performing charter schools open, and close ineffective ones. H.R. 5 lacks support for states' efforts to build quality early childhood education programs. The list goes on.

Research shows that education is one of the single best investments we can make in our country's future. Unfortunately, H.R. 5 amounts to a dangerous divestment from education, and thus our nation's growth and vitality. To start with, the bill's so-called Title I "portability" provision illustrates how the majority would gut schools of the necessary resources to provide all students a high-quality education.

Title I is the primary source of federal funding to schools serving poor children. Study after study has demonstrated that low-income students face significantly greater challenges when the majority of their classmates are also in poverty. The research shows that targeting resources to schools and districts with the highest concentrations of poverty is effective in mitigating these ill effects.<sup>1</sup> Current law reflects this evidence and targets funding accordingly.

Making Title I funds portable – which supposedly allows the money to "follow the student" – stands in direct contradiction to this widely documented research. As a result of H.R. 5's funding formulas, much of the Title I support meant for our most disadvantaged students would be reallocated to more affluent schools and districts. Numerous Analyses demonstrate that Title I portability will take away money from our poorest schools and districts, undermining the historic federal role of targeting aid to our neediest students. One recent report found that, on average, districts with high concentrations of poverty could lose an average of around \$85 per student and the most affluent districts could gain more than \$290 per student as a result of portability.<sup>2</sup>

To have federal funds "follow the student" may make a great sound bite, but the resulting policy falls apart upon serious scrutiny, with damaging effects on students who need support the most.

To add insult to injury, H.R. 5 would eliminate the "maintenance of effort" requirement in ESEA, allowing states and districts to reduce their nonfederal education spending without any penalty. At our forum, we heard from Michael Casserly, President of Great City Schools, who called maintenance of effort requirements "among the most critical provisions and successful components of federal education law—and among the most effective things the federal government does." By eliminating maintenance of effort, H.R. 5 would allow states and districts to use education funds for tax relief or any non-education initiative. This would turn ESEA into a glorified slush fund and lead either to diminished funding for needy students or a massive burden on the federal government.

The net effect of both Title I portability and cutting state maintenance of effort is to undermine the federal commitment to our poorest schools and children. These are fatal flaws in a bill loaded with major faults. That's why a wide range of organizations representing business, labor, civil rights, disabilities and education reform have opposed this legislation. I urge my colleagues to also oppose this bill.

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<sup>1</sup> [http://www.prrac.org/pdf/annotated\\_bibliography\\_on\\_school\\_poverty\\_concentration.pdf](http://www.prrac.org/pdf/annotated_bibliography_on_school_poverty_concentration.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.americanprogress.org/issues/education/report/2015/02/04/105896/robin-hood-in-reverse/>