



The Honorable Bobby Scott
Ranking Member
Education & Workforce Committee
1201 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

July 24, 2018

Dear Ranking Member Scott,

The National Disability Rights Network (NDRN) writes in enthusiastic support of The Aim Higher Act.

NDRN is the non-profit membership organization for the federally mandated Protection and Advocacy (P&A) and Client Assistance Program (CAP) agencies for individuals with disabilities. The P&A and CAP agencies were established by the United States Congress to protect the rights of people with disabilities and their families through legal support, advocacy, referral, and education. P&As and CAPs are in all 50 states, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, and the U.S. Territories (American Samoa, Guam, Northern Mariana Islands, and the US Virgin Islands), and there is a P&A and CAP affiliated with the Native American Consortium which includes the Hopi, Navajo, and San Juan Southern Paiute Nations in the Four Corners region of the Southwest. Collectively, the 57 P&A and CAP agencies are the largest provider of legally based advocacy services to people with disabilities in the United States.

One of the critical areas of focus for the P&A/CAP agencies is education related issues. In 2016, the P&As worked on nearly 14,000 individual and hundreds of systemic cases related to education and the enforcement of the civil rights of students with disabilities.

NDRN applauds the meaningful inclusion of and support for students with disabilities contained within the Aim Higher Act. We know that currently far too many individuals with disabilities have limited access to higher education. Indeed, individuals with disabilities are less than half as likely as people without disabilities to obtain a bachelor's degree. Without opportunities to access higher education such as contained within the Aim Higher Act, people with disabilities will continue to experience high levels of unemployment and reliance on public benefits. The Aim Higher Act will significantly decrease barriers to higher education and increase the chances of people with disabilities attending an institution of higher education to obtain competitive, integrated employment.

Specifically, NDRN applauds the following provisions found in the Aim Higher Act:

- **Improving Access to Higher Education:** The Aim Higher Act funds access and inclusion, encourages universal design for learning, creates an Office of Disability in every institution of higher education, creates resources and opportunities for students with intellectual disabilities, and encourages colleges to put students with disabilities at the forefront;
- **Increasing Training for Teaching Diverse Students:** The Aim Higher Act will increase teacher preparation programs with dual certification for Special Education certification and English-language instruction, enabling English language learning students with disabilities to have access to the education that they deserve;
- **Reaffirming Diversity and Civil Rights Enforcement:** The Aim Higher Act implements a variety of civil rights affirming policies, including the mandatory appointment of a Special Assistant for Equity and Inclusion, ensuring disability civil rights, and
- **Simplifying Student Loan Repayment:** The Aim Higher Act ensures disability forgiveness to Parent PLUS loan holders if their student sustains a total and permanent disability, ensuring that students with disabilities can focus on their health first.

NDRN thanks you for your tireless advocacy for students with disabilities and stands ready to assist you in any way as the process of reauthorizing the Higher Education Opportunity Act moves forward. Should you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact Amanda Lowe, Senior Public Policy Analyst at Amanda.lowe@ndrn.org.

Sincerely,



Curt Decker
Executive Director