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August 13, 2025

The Honorable Gene Dodaro
Comptroller General of the United States
U.S. Government Accountability Office
441 G St., NW
Washington, DC 20548

Dear Mr. Dodaro:

I am writing to request that the Government Accountability Office (GAO) examine how states, school districts, and schools identify and use evidence to improve our nation's most vulnerable schools as required by the *Elementary and Secondary Education Act* (ESEA), as amended by the *Every Student Succeeds Act* (ESSA).¹ ESSA empowered school leaders to identify and make use of evidence-based interventions to help improve outcomes at schools that need it the most.² This is a key component to improving student outcomes in these schools. However, there are broad, open questions regarding how states, districts, and schools identify and use evidence-based interventions to support schools identified for Comprehensive Support and Improvement and/or Targeted Support and Improvement as well as how they implement these new programs. For example, in GAO's most recent study on school improvement activities, *Education Could Enhance Oversight of School Improvement Activities* (GAO-24-105648), school officials interviewed by GAO said they often turned to informal means of selecting interventions, including asking for word-of-mouth recommendations from colleagues or posting in social media groups.

The evidence requirements in ESSA are designed to ensure that states, districts, and schools can identify programs, practices, products, and policies that work across various student populations and demographics.³ Congress needs to understand how districts and school leaders are actually implementing the evidence-based requirements in order to understand how the law is working.

¹ 20 U.S.C. § 6303 (2020).

² 20 U.S.C. § 6303(b)(1)(B) (2020).

³ U.S. Dep't of Educ., Inst. of Educ. Scis., What Works Clearinghouse: ESSA Tiers of Evidence, <https://ies.ed.gov/ncee/wwc/essa>.

The Honorable Gene Dodaro
August 13, 2025
Page 2

This understanding includes any challenges faced in identifying and implementing these practices.

Specifically, I ask that GAO study the following:

1. How do the evidence-based requirements in ESSA affect the ways selected states and districts identify, select, and implement interventions?
2. What are the barriers or challenges that states, districts, and schools face in identifying, selecting, and implementing the evidence-based requirements in their interventions?
3. How can the Department of Education assist school leaders in meeting the evidence-based requirements in ESSA?

Should you have any questions about this request, please contact Ilana Brunner (ilana.brunner@mail.house.gov) and Samantha Wilkerson (samantha.wilkerson@mail.house.gov).

Sincerely,



ROBERT C. "BOBBY" SCOTT
Ranking Member
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