



H.J. Res. 58 – The Ongoing Republican Assault on Public Education

Republicans are using the Congressional Review Act process to overturn critical safeguards and protections for America’s students and working families. H.J. Res 58 is the most recent attempt to dismantle and undermine the U.S. Department of Education and jeopardize educational equity.

On October 12, 2016, the U.S. Department of Education, under the Obama administration, released its [final rule](#) on teacher preparation program to improve program quality and transparency. This final rule provides notable flexibility to states in assessing the quality of their teacher preparation programs, which is a statutory requirement enacted in the 2008 bipartisan comprehensive reauthorization of the Higher Education Act (HEA). The rule also ensures that recipients of TEACH grants only attend a teacher preparation program that “provides high-quality teacher education,” as required by HEA. The TEACH grant program provides grants to undergraduate and graduate students who commit to teaching at a high-needs school.

On February 2, 2017, Rep. Brett Guthrie (R-KY), Chairman of the Subcommittee on Higher Education and Workforce Development of the Committee on Education and the Workforce, introduced a [joint resolution](#) of disapproval under the Congressional Review Act (CRA) to nullify the teacher preparation program regulation. Efforts to repeal this rule will also prevent future consideration of a substantially similar rule, unless Congress enacted subsequent enabling legislation. Without this regulation, the bipartisan intent of Congress to ensure parents, teachers, and programs can assess teacher preparation quality under the 2008 reauthorization of HEA goes unfulfilled. Completely eliminating this rule would be a significant step backward for prospective and current teachers, parents, and the more than 50 million students attending America’s public schools.

Enactment of H.J. Res. 58 will undermine key equity protections championed by Democrats in the most recent reauthorization of the Higher Education Act. The Trump administration should use administrative tools available to amend the regulation, not leave the provisions unregulated indefinitely.

The final regulations issued by the U.S. Department of Education would improve the quality of our country’s teacher preparation programs and public education system as a whole, by:

- **Improving transparency and quality of teacher preparation programs in order to benefit prospective and current teachers, parents, and students.**
 - The regulations build on state and local innovations taking place across the country and require meaningful feedback from teachers to inform continuous program improvement and expand best practices.
 - New transparency provisions will help to address, rather than amplify, the teacher shortage in high need subject and geographic areas and enable districts and schools to deploy their best

teachers where they are needed the most. [A 2016 Learning Policy Institute report](#) estimates our schools will face an annual shortage of 100,000 teachers by 2025.

- Ensuring that taxpayer-funded TEACH Grants serve students enrolling in high-quality programs will safeguard that all teachers enter the classroom ready to meet the needs of *all* students, particularly those in high-needs schools.
- **Creating a diverse teacher workforce that better reflects America’s diverse student body.**
 - The regulations empower states and teacher preparation programs to develop a diverse teacher workforce, addressing a critical teacher workforce need that ultimately helps students.
 - [A 2016 Brookings Institution report](#) found that 50 percent of K-12 students are from minority groups, as compared to only 18 percent of classroom teachers. A growing body of evidence demonstrates that the diversity gap negatively impacts school culture and student achievement.
- **Providing significant flexibility for states to create high-quality, innovative teacher preparation programs.**
 - Under the regulation, states, not the federal government, would be the key decision makers in determining what it means for a teacher preparation program to be “high-quality.”
 - States are empowered to –
 1. include as many metrics as they want;
 2. weigh such metrics any way they want; and to
 3. decipher program quality using performance levels developed by the state.
 - This structure gives state leaders enormous flexibility in the design of program accountability and reporting systems to reflect local needs and priorities, while ensuring a consistent measure of program quality that is transparent to students, teachers, parents, and taxpayers.

Continuous improvement and program transparency in teacher preparation programs is necessary not only to ensure that every K12 student is taught by a great teacher, but also to ensure prospective teachers have the information necessary to make an informed decision when entering the teaching profession. Nullifying the teacher preparation regulations and subsequently leaving the provisions unregulated would undermine the bipartisan Congressional intent of the 2008 reauthorization of the HEA. Without these regulations, the Department of Education will not be able to provide any guidelines until HEA is reauthorized. Furthermore, upending the teacher preparation regulations would remove transparency for prospective teachers seeking to compare teacher preparation programs; decrease teacher voice in providing feedback to improve teacher preparation programs; and jeopardize access to a high-quality education for the more than 50 million public school students across the country.