

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20510

May 11, 2016

The Honorable Dr. John King
Secretary of Education
U.S. Department of Education
400 Maryland Ave., S.W.
Washington, DC 20202

Dear Secretary King:

As implementation of the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) continues, we write to ask that the Department of Education take demonstrable steps to ensure that both states and local educational agencies develop and implement processes to facilitate meaningful stakeholder collaboration and active participation in the implementation of this new law. State and school district decision-making now will shape teaching and learning for years to come. Hearing from teachers, school leaders, parents, community leaders, including local and state civil rights leaders and child advocates, and others will be essential in making sure the law works in the coming months and years.

Congress deliberately included multiple provisions within ESSA to ensure a collaborative consultation processes with a wide range of stakeholders in development and submission of state and local implementation program plans, as required under the ESSA. Unfortunately, as states embark on plan development, there are early reports of systemic barriers impeding the participation of teachers, paraprofessionals, specialized instructional support personnel, parents, and other stakeholders in state and local plan development. For example, lack of consideration for working parents and community members in scheduling meetings with stakeholders or the inability of teachers, paraprofessionals, and other school personnel to secure release time to enable full participation in plan development. Further, guidance should make clear that all stakeholder groups should be engaged and allowed to nominate their own representatives in state and local processes and that there should also be robust and multiple opportunities to provide input in the process.

Our nation's parents, civil rights leaders, and school personnel, including classroom teachers and paraprofessionals, will provide a critical voice to ensure that new state and local plans under ESSA are developed to meet the needs of our nation's students. We ask that the Department quickly provide guidance and technical assistance to States and local educational agencies regarding the successful elimination of systemic barriers, including the barrier of lack of release time, to stakeholder collaboration to ensure plan development is informed by those charged with the daily work of implementation to truly support and improve teaching and learning.

Meaningful and effective stakeholder collaboration is essential to the successful implementation of the ESSA. We expect the Department of Education to use every available opportunity to assist

states and school districts to make consultation processes truly meaningful, including by breaking down barriers to ensure full participation of all stakeholders in consultation processes.

We look forward to working with you on continued implementation of this law over the coming weeks and months.

Sincerely,



Patty Murray
United States Senator



Robert C. "Bobby" Scott
United States Representative