



February 27, 2012

Honorable John Kline
Chairman
Education and the Workforce Committee
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Chairman Kline:

On behalf of the American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education (AACTE) I write to oppose H.R. 3990 and H.R. 3989, the “Encouraging Innovation and Effective Teachers Act” and the “Students Success Act.” While we appreciate you moving forward on the reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA), and we appreciate your thoughtful staff, there are too many provisions in the bill that do not serve to strengthen our nation’s education system for students, particularly our highest need students.

Ensuring effective teachers and principals in every school, particularly high-need schools, is a key priority for AACTE. The nation simply will not maintain its competitive economy, maintain its capacity for creativity, and develop informed and active citizens if we do not strengthen and reform the preparation of all educators. These bills fail to do that.

Our primary concerns with the bills are as follows:

1. **The repeal of the Teacher Quality Partnership (Title II HEA) grants.** H.R. 3990 repeals this innovative and highly promising program. The loss of this program would eliminate the only federal funds specifically targeted to reforming teacher preparation at institutions of higher education. Though Title II of HEA can and should be strengthened, an outright repeal of the program will detract from the goal of producing the best prepared and most effective teachers for our nation’s children.
2. **The elimination of the 2.5% set aside for higher education.** By eliminating this set-aside, higher education, which prepares 90 percent of all new teachers, loses dedicated funding for improvement. This funding is currently used for higher education to develop professional development for K-12 personnel. AACTE believes these funds should be expanded to provide technical assistance to low-performing preparation programs and to develop and implement valid and reliable teacher performance assessments.

3. **No threshold to enter the profession.** The elimination of the definition of a highly qualified teacher means that in the two or three years it takes to collect data to evaluate a new teacher's effectiveness, there will be no mechanism to ensure that teachers have met even a minimum threshold for competence and demonstrated the capacity to have an impact on student learning. Additionally, if a child is in a classroom with a teacher who has not completed their preparation, it is important and fair to give parents the right to know. The bill should include a requirement that a local educational agency must notify parents if their child is being taught by a teacher who has not completed their preparation.

I again thank you for your work on ESEA reauthorization and look forward to working with you as this process moves forward. If we can provide any additional information, please contact Jon Gentile at jgentile@aacte.org.

Sincerely,



Sharon P. Robinson, Ed.D.
President and CEO

About AACTE

The American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education (AACTE) is a national alliance of educator preparation programs dedicated to the highest quality professional development of teachers and school leaders in order to enhance PK-12 student learning. The 800 institutions holding AACTE membership represent public and private colleges and universities in every state, the District of Columbia, the Virgin Islands, Puerto Rico, and Guam. AACTE's reach and influence fuel its mission of serving learners by providing all school personnel with superior training and continuing education.

cc: Members of the U.S. House Education and the Workforce Committee