

Strengthening the Every Child Achieves Act for ELLs

English language learners—preK-12 students who are working toward becoming proficient in the English language—are one of the fastest-growing student populations in the country. The Every Child Achieves Act, as voted out of committee, represents a significant step forward toward supporting the academic and language needs of ELLs, adequately preparing teachers to work with ELLs, and promoting equity. We are pleased that the Every Child Achieves Act took this important bipartisan first step in reclaiming the original purpose of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, and we offer the following suggestions for how the bill could be strengthened to promote educational excellence and equity for ELLs to ensure they have access to and are able to meet the same challenging college- and career-ready standards required of all students.

Funding for High-Quality and Appropriate Native Language Assessments

One of the most important provisions in the bill is the recognition that native language assessments can more accurately capture students' knowledge and skills than testing in a second language that is not fully developed. This recognition is a significant step toward more appropriately assessing English learners, and it better aligns with what research shows and educators know: that it takes time to learn English. ELLs need enough time to be part of the English-language culture. Native language assessments can also help educators separate linguistic from cognitive or content knowledge issues. Yet while the Every Child Achieves Act allows for native language assessments, we know that states' educational resources are stretched thin. *We therefore suggest a dedicated funding stream for the development of native language assessments.*

Increasing Opportunity for Multilingualism

ELLs must be given the supports they need to learn English so that they have full access to American society. At the same time, all students—ELLs and native English speakers alike—can benefit from being proficient in more than one language in today's interconnected and globally competitive world, and our society will reap the rewards. *We therefore suggest support for high-quality bilingual education, dual language programs and multilingual enrichment programs, such as providing support to states that wish to develop and implement a "seal of biliteracy" that high school students can work toward.*

Support for Students with Interrupted Formal Education

Students with interrupted formal education have needs that generally overlap with those of other ELLs, but they will likely need additional supports and instruction ranging from basic skills to social-emotional counseling. We know that providing intensive supports to these students can translate to success for them, yet not all schools are equipped to provide these supports. *We therefore suggest specifically allocated resources for students with interrupted formal education.*

Early Childhood Education

High-quality early childhood education helps prepare all students for formal education, and this is especially true for ELLs. While ELLs have some of the lowest enrollment rates in early childhood education programs, they make some of the greatest gains when they participate. *We therefore suggest emphasizing the benefit of early childhood education in getting ELLs ready to learn.*