



DIGNITY IN SCHOOLS

DIGNITY IN SCHOOLS CAMPAIGN | INFO@DIGNITYINSCHOOLS.ORG | WWW.DIGNITYINSCHOOLS.ORG

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Dear Senator,

As a coalition of 98 organizations from 25 states, including students, parents, educators, researchers, LGBTQ, civil rights, youth advocacy, and education organizations dedicated to ending overly punitive school discipline practices that push students out of school, the Dignity in Schools Campaign (DSC) urges you to maintain the federal role in education in the *Every Child Achieves Act* (S. 1177).

We believe that the *Every Child Achieves Act* must include meaningful federal accountability over states for discipline reform, improved school climate, and a mechanism for federal support and intervention in cases of states and districts with persistent discipline disparities. Without this accountability, the academic and life outcomes of many students will continue to be compromised. Whether through early involvement with the juvenile justice system or compromised educational outcomes due to loss of valuable instruction time—the consequences of discriminatory discipline practices in our nation’s public schools are severe.

Unfortunately, the *Every Child Achieves Act* falls far short of the meaningful accountability needed to incentivize states to implement school discipline reform and foster positive school climate improvements. Most significantly, the bill fails to ensure that the federal government can hold states accountable to act to remedy discipline disparities.

We believe that the federal government must retain its authority to ensure that the law is appropriately implemented and that the most vulnerable students are protected. This reflects the original intent of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA), first passed in 1965—to authorize the federal government to use enforcement power to ensure that states fulfill the law’s promise to serve “the special educational needs of all educationally deprived children.”¹

The federal government plays a key role in supporting positive and inclusive discipline alternatives, such as Schoolwide Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (SWPBIS), restorative practices, peer mediation, professional development training on trauma-responsive approaches, and mental health services. Without maintaining federal accountability and a

¹ The Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA), P.L. 89-10, Section 201.

mechanism for federal intervention in the form of supports for those LEAs with persistent discipline disparities, DSC is unable to support this bill.

We recognize that sanctions and stigmatizing labels undermine schools' ability to support student achievement, therefore; the federal accountability that we support does not include the punitive interventions and sanctions of No Child Left Behind (NCLB). Instead, we support accountability and oversight that ensures that schools have the supports and services needed to improve outcomes. This federal oversight and enforcement power is necessary to ensure that all children in this country are afforded the equal educational opportunity envisioned in the law. We thank you for your consideration of our position as the Senate considers the *Every Child Achieves Act* this week. If you have any questions or if we can be of assistance, please contact Janel George at jgeorge@naacpldf.org. Thanks for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

The Dignity in Schools Campaign
www.dignityinschools.org