

**Bob Wise**  
**Governor of West Virginia, 2001–2005**  
**Member of U.S. House of Representatives, 1983–2001**



December 1, 2015

The Honorable Lamar Alexander  
Chairman  
Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions  
U.S. Senate  
428 Dirksen Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable John Kline  
Chairman  
Committee on Education and the Workforce  
U.S. House of Representatives  
2181 Rayburn House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Patty Murray  
Ranking Member  
Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions  
U.S. Senate  
428 Dirksen Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Robert “Bobby” Scott  
Ranking Member  
Committee on Education and the Workforce  
U.S. House of Representatives  
2181 Rayburn House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Alexander, Chairman Kline, Ranking Member Murray, and Ranking Member Scott:

The Alliance for Excellent Education (the Alliance) is pleased to endorse the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA). This reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act places an important emphasis on the nation’s lowest-performing high schools. In doing so, ESSA will support the work of educators across America to continue increasing the nation’s high school graduation rate and ensure that all students have the opportunity to succeed in postsecondary education and the workforce.

The American education system has made great strides in supporting high school students. The nation’s high school graduation rate is at an all-time high of 81 percent and the number of high school dropouts decreased from 1 million in 2008 to approximately 750,000 in 2012. Still, there is much work to be done. Across the country, there are 1,235 high schools that fail to graduate one-third or more of their students. These low-graduation-rate high schools disproportionately serve students of color and students from low-income families. Moreover, graduation rate gaps between subgroups of students persist. For example, in fifteen states, the gap in high school graduation rates between African American and white students is more than 15 percentage points.

ESSA maintains an emphasis on increasing graduation rates and requires states to focus on low-graduation-rate high schools and schools with subgroups of students who consistently demonstrate low achievement and graduation rates. In particular, the Alliance appreciates that ESSA will

- maintain an accurate calculation of the four-year adjusted cohort graduation rate and the extended-year adjusted cohort graduation rate;

- require high schools that fail to graduate one-third or more of students to receive support from state accountability systems and ensure these schools receive comprehensive support and are eligible for school improvement funding;
- focus on schools in which subgroups of students are consistently underperforming and ensure these schools receive targeted support and are eligible for school improvement funding; and
- require state plans to address the transition from middle to high school and from high school to postsecondary education, noting the importance of integrating rigorous academics, career and technical education, and work-based learning.

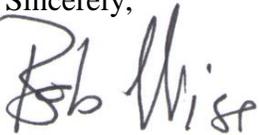
In addition, ESSA recognizes the need to strengthen all of America's schools. In particular, the Alliance appreciates that the bill will

- improve the quality of state assessments and allow them to be delivered in the form of extended-performance tasks;
- maintain federal funding for state assessments while allowing for competency-based assessments and include an innovative assessment and accountability pilot;
- require states to set challenging academic content standards that are aligned with entrance requirements for credit-bearing course work in the system of public higher education in the state and relevant state career and technical education standards;
- support personalization, including through the effective use of data and technology;
- build teacher and principal capacity through improved preparation, residency, and induction programs, and continued opportunities for professional learning and leadership;
- support comprehensive literacy state development grants by including provisions from the Literacy Education for All, Results for the Nation (LEARN) Act; and
- include funding to support the effective use of technology in the nation's classrooms through Student Support and Academic Enrichment grants.

ESSA provides states and districts with a great degree of flexibility and responsibility. Developing such state-set policies that relate to "n-size," achievement and graduation goals, timelines for progress, and school improvement strategies warrants the strong involvement of diverse communities and education experts. The Alliance is committed to working in partnership with civil rights organizations and others to support states in ensuring an equity-driven implementation of this law.

Thank you for your leadership. The Alliance looks forward to continuing its work with you to implement the Every Student Succeeds Act.

Sincerely,



Bob Wise  
President

