NCSECS supports the passage of ESSA

WASHINGTON, DC – In response to the imminent passage of the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), Lauren Morando Rhim, executive director of the National Center for Special Education in Charter Schools (NCSECS) issued the following statement:

“NCSECS supports passage of the ESSA. While imperfect in its approach to accountability, the ESSA does strive to hold schools, districts and states accountable when groups of students consistently do not meet state standards. This is clearly an improvement over waivers. The ESSA protects students with disabilities from the abuse and overuse of alternate assessments and promotes access to the general curriculum for students with the most significant cognitive disabilities. Finally, the bill includes a bipartisan charter innovation program that supports charter authorizers and charter schools to effectively plan, implement and improve the education of all students, including students with disabilities.”

Morando Rhim concluded, “We want to ensure that the 2.5 million K-12 students attending public charter schools nationwide – including the more than 250,000 students eligible for special education under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act are fully supported. We know that rigorous accountability matters and we will be working to ensure students with disabilities are held to the same high expectations as their peers and provided the evidence based interventions they need and deserve.”
December 1, 2015

Dear Ranking Member Murray and Ranking Member Scott:

The National Center for Special Education in Charter Schools (NCSECS) is dedicated to ensuring that students with disabilities have equal access to charter schools and that public charter schools are designed and operated to enable all students to succeed. We want to ensure that the 2.5 million K-12 students attending public charter schools nationwide – including the more than 250,000 students eligible for special education under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act are fully supported. Today, NCSECS writes to support passage of the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) to amend the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA).

While imperfect in its approach to accountability, the ESSA does strive to hold schools, districts and states accountable when groups of students consistently do not meet state standards. While no timeframes are provided through ESSA in assuring the provision of evidence-based intervention, we do view the ESSA’s approach to supporting student subgroups an improvement over ESEA waivers. Additionally, in ESSA, students with disabilities are protected from overuse and abuse of alternate assessments by placing a 1% state-level participation cap on the use of these assessments for students with the most significant cognitive disabilities.

Finally, the ESSA includes the charter school program authorized as Part C of Title IV. This bipartisan charter law updates and improves charter innovation programs by supporting charter authorizers and charter schools to effectively plan, implement and improve the education of all students, including students with disabilities. The charter law emphasizes the importance of strong charter authorizing and reinforces that states must explain, as part of state planning, how they will carry out this objective in support of charters more effectively focusing and implementing sound practices around recruitment, enrollment and retention of all students.

NCSECS works closely with state charter authorizers, charter networks and charter schools across the U.S. We know that rigorous accountability matters and we will be working to ensure students with disabilities are held to the same high expectations as their peers and provided the evidence based interventions they need and deserve. NCSECS appreciates the opportunity to partner with you now and in the future.

Sincerely,

Lauren Morando Rhim, Ph.D.
Executive Director

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