

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

November 17, 2015

The Honorable Lamar Alexander
Chairman
Committee on Health, Education, Labor &
Pensions
U.S. Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Patty Murray
Ranking Member
Committee on Health, Education, Labor &
Pensions
U.S. Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

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

The Honorable Robert C. Scott
Ranking Member
Committee on Education and the Workforce
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

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

As you make final revisions to a bipartisan conference agreement on the reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA), we, the undersigned, strongly urge you to maintain several key provisions for school-based treatment and preventive programming for children at elevated risk of exposure to community violence.

Although all children should be safe from fear and aggression in their homes, schools, and neighborhoods, each year, two out of three youth in the United States are exposed to violence, crime, abuse, or psychological trauma. Students traumatized by exposure to violence have been shown to have lower grade point averages, more negative marks on their academic records, and greater absenteeism than other students. They may have increased difficulties concentrating and learning at school and may engage in unusually reckless or aggressive behavior.

As school-based prevention and afterschool programs have proven effective in significantly lowering rates of aggression and violent behavior and improving connectedness and academic performance for students, we respectfully request that the following provisions are preserved in a reauthorization of the ESEA:

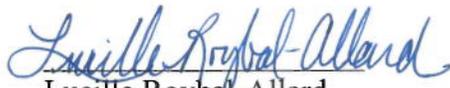
- **Funding eligibility for evidence-based gang prevention and school safety programs, as reflected in both H.R. 5, the Student Success Act and S.1177, the Every Child Achieves Act.** According to a Columbia University survey, 46 percent of students in

public schools reported the presence of gangs and gang members at school. School-based programs have been proven to reduce risk for problem behavior and violence in the general school population.

- **Dedicated funding for 21st Century Community Centers, as reflected in S.1177, the Every Child Achieves Act.** 21st Century Community Centers provide academic enrichment opportunities during non-school hours for children, particularly students who attend high-poverty and low-performing schools, that are essential to their success. Studies show that most juvenile crime takes place between the hours of 2:00 and 8:00 pm, and that children are also at much greater risk of being the victims of crime during the hours after school. When students have safe and enriching environments staffed by caring adults, they are much less likely to engage in high-risk and unhealthy behavior.
- **Integration of school climate, school discipline, trauma-informed services and mental health services in state and local plans and report cards under Title I, as reflected in S.1177, the Every Child Achieves Act.** Schools must be required to adequately address students' physical and mental health and create a positive school climate conducive to learning. Performance targets set by states should integrate school climate metrics, including suspension, expulsion, and other exclusionary discipline practice rates, as well as measures for mental health services. In turn, schools with disproportionate rates of bullying, harassment, violence and exclusionary discipline should receive targeted resources and interventions to address school climate.
- **Professional development in school climate, school discipline, trauma-informed services and mental health services in Title II, as reflected in S.1177, the Every Child Achieves Act.**

Safe and supportive environments are essential to closing the achievement gap and preparing vulnerable or at-risk youth populations for lifelong success. As you discuss reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, we strongly urge you to include the aforementioned afterschool programming priorities.

Sincerely,


Lucille Roybal-Allard
Member of Congress


Karen Bass
Member of Congress