



League of United Latin American Citizens

August 27, 2013

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U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Member of Congress:

The League of United Latin American Citizens (LULAC), the nation's oldest and largest Hispanic civil rights organization, is committed to advancing the educational attainment of Hispanics across the country. Of great importance to our organization is closing the achievement gap between Latino students and their peers. Recently, the Campaign for High School Equity (CHSE) released a white paper entitled, *Maintaining a Focus on Subgroups in an Era of Elementary and Secondary Education Act Waivers*. LULAC is a leading member of CHSE, a diverse coalition of national civil rights and education advocacy organizations representing communities of color. We write to bring your attention to CHSE's white paper, which raises serious questions about state accountability plans under the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) waiver program of the U.S. Department of Education.

Our organization believes that schools should be held accountable for the academic achievement of underserved students. Under the No Child Left Behind federal education law (NCLB), states are held accountable for the academic performance of groups of vulnerable students. ESEA waivers excuse states from core accountability provisions of the current version of the No Child Left Behind. Instead, states that receive waivers create their own systems of accountability and improvement that differ greatly from those required under NCLB. Forty-one states and the District of Columbia have already received waivers.

CHSE's white paper found that although state accountability systems vary widely, many states group the lowest-performing 25 or 30 percent of students into "super subgroups." This method of grouping takes the focus off of the performance of individual groups of students, such as students of color, so that performance of low achieving communities no longer triggers intervention. Accordingly, the use of "super subgroups" could lead to fewer students of color receiving the supports and interventions they need.

LULAC believes that universal and quality public education is the foundation for lifelong success. Therefore, we are concerned that waivers are affecting the educational attainment of students of color, Native, English Language Learners (ELLs) and low-income students. We believe that this policy raises serious concerns about whether vulnerable students will receive the attention and support they need in order to graduate high school ready for college and career.

We urge you to read CHSE's report, attached to this letter (downloadable copy can be found at http://lulac.org/assets/pdfs/WaiversReport_R8.pdf), and communicate our concerns to the Department of Education so that this ESEA waiver policy can be improved. In addition, we ask that you support a new and focused ESEA that ties federal funding to clear expectations for high achievement, the closing of achievement gaps, and continued progress in high school graduation rates among underserved students.

Our organization looks forward to working with you to strengthen measures of accountability to foster education equality. Please do not hesitate to contact Luis Torres, LULAC's Director of Education Policy, at 202-833-6130 or latorres@lulac.org should you have any questions or would like more information.

Sincerely,

Margaret Moran
LULAC National President