

September 13, 2023

The Honorable Virginia Foxx
Chairwoman
U.S. House Ed. & the Workforce Committee
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Robert Scott
Ranking Member
U.S. House Ed. & the Workforce Committee
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairwoman Foxx, Ranking Member Scott, and members of the House Education & Workforce Committee,

On behalf of 10,000 school district leaders in forty-nine states, we write to share AASA, The School Superintendents Association's views on two bills that will be voted on by the House Education and Workforce Committee tomorrow: H.R. 4529 and H.R. 5110.

Congress is long overdue to reauthorize the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act. While AASA does not object specifically to the intent or the legislative text of H.R. 4529, we oppose the advancement of piecemeal bills addressing or clarifying provisions in IDEA outside of comprehensive reauthorization. Our children with disabilities, our special educators and our parents deserve meaningful special education reform. Rather than tinker on the edges of one provision in a 160-page law as H.R. 4529 does, we need a sweeping re-examination of the K-12 special education system today and how a law passed almost 20 years ago continues to fail to meet the needs of today's students with disabilities, educators and families. We urge the Committee to reject the legislation and instead begin to hold hearings, issue reports, and engage stakeholders on how to reimagine, re-legislate and fund the only federal special education law in the United States.

AASA supports H.R. 5110 and believes that a legislative solution is important to address confusion over the Bipartisan Safer Communities Act's provision that the U.S. Department of Education has interpreted as limiting the use of federal funding for district or school programs such as archery or hunting. We appreciate the alignment between this amended text and the bipartisan language proposed by Senator Cornyn and his sixteen colleagues in a letter addressed last week to the Senate Appropriations Committee. We urge House and Senate appropriators to ensure this language is included in a FY24 funding package.

We encourage the House Education & Workforce Committee to continue to tackle K-12 policy legislation, but to do so in a manner that is meaningful. Legislation to address the dearth of youth mental health services in schools, to fund safe and healthy school facilities and to improve and expand our school meals programs are just a few ways that the Committee could use its jurisdiction and membership to make a positive difference for every child in a public school in the United States.

We appreciate the Committee's attention to our views and are happy to answer any questions about AASA's positions on these bills.

Sincerely,
Sasha Pudelski
Director of Advocacy