

June 13, 2019

The Honorable Lamar Alexander
Chairman
Senate Health, Education, Labor
and Pensions Committee
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Patty Murray
Ranking Member
Senate Health, Education, Labor
and Pensions Committee
Washington, D.C. 20510

Include the PREP Act (S.752) in the Senate Higher Education Act Reauthorization Bill

Dear Chairman Alexander and Ranking Member Murray:

Evolving student needs, increasing levels of educator attrition, and declining teacher preparation program enrollments are threatening to undermine the quality of the nation's public schools. Local and State leaders are working hard to address these widespread challenges, and you can help them succeed by ensuring that the next Higher Education Act (HEA) includes a much more robust focus on educator recruitment, preparation, and retention.

Our associations represent the teachers, principals, district officials, and policymakers responsible for serving the nation's elementary and secondary students and their families. Our members represent a diverse array of perspectives and populations, but we all agree that more must be done, including through the HEA, to prepare and support the nation's educators. A stronger HEA will help schools align and reach the goals of the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA). Keeping and developing successful educators begins with effective preparation, especially for educators of special populations of students such as English Learners, students with disabilities, students affected by trauma, and those with other unique needs that require extra support.

We also agree that the PREP Act (S.752), introduced by Senator Kaine and Senator Collins, provides a sensible approach for updating HEA consistent with the practical reforms already unfolding in the field. The PREP Act's focus on promoting improved collaboration between elementary, secondary, and postsecondary institutions; boosting recruitment of a desperately needed diverse educator workforce; helping states improve preparation and residency program quality; and increasing transparency and accountability will help local and State leaders tasked with ensuring that every student succeeds. Inclusion of the PREP Act in the next HEA would provide valuable support for the local and State policy and practice improvements already underway.

We support your decision to make renewing HEA the HELP Committee's top education policy priority this year and hope you will integrate the PREP Act into the HEA legislation the committee may consider this summer. Our members face daunting education workforce needs,

and we encourage you to use this opportunity to help them strengthen the education profession and make a significant, long-term difference for the students they serve.

Sincerely,

AASA, The School Superintendents Association

American Federation of Teachers

Council of Chief State School Officers

National Association of Elementary School Principals

National Association of Secondary School Principals

National Association of State Boards of Education

National Education Association

National School Boards Association

cc: Senate HELP Committee Members