



STATE OF IOWA

TERRY BRANSTAD, GOVERNOR
KIM REYNOLDS, LT. GOVERNOR

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
JASON E. GLASS, DIRECTOR

August 24, 2012

The Honorable Chuck Grassley
135 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C., 20510

Dear Senator Grassley,

The No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) should be commended for its unflinching moral purpose: Providing a quality education for every child in our nation, especially those in poverty. Yet after a decade of implementation, it is now abundantly clear that the law's prescriptive federal mandates are heavy-handed and imbalanced. Further, the one-size-fits-all approach to accountability and school improvement is ill-suited for many states in our nation, including our great state of Iowa.

As Congress considers the reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA), we, the Executive Directors of the Iowa Association of School Boards, the Iowa State Education Association, the School Administrators of Iowa, and the Iowa Department of Education humbly offer a few key design principles on which we all stand, unified in solid agreement:

- Work to restore the appropriate balance of state and federal authority, with the states serving as the primary drivers and determiners of education policy.
- Retain the structure of the law, but focus and concentrate every aspect of a reauthorized ESEA through its laudable moral purpose: Closing achievement gaps and improving educational services for students in poverty.
- Any uniformly mandated policies included in the law should be strongly supported by quality evidence. If we are to subject potentially every public school student in the United States to a policy, we should have an extraordinarily high degree of certainty about that policy's impact.
- Set high standards and goals, but allow states the flexibility to design accountability and assessment models that are tailored to fit individual state-specific contexts.
- Intentionally create a process to support research and development around closing the achievement gaps and better serving students in poverty. Once innovative methods are empirically validated, Congress should strongly consider including them in future reauthorizations of the law.

Grimes State Office Building - 400 E 14th St - Des Moines IA 50319-0146

PHONE (515) 281-5294 FAX (515) 242-5988

www.educateiowa.gov

Championing Excellence for all Iowa Students through Leadership and Service

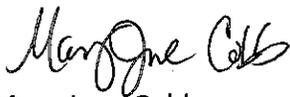
Federal policy can serve an important and supportive role with states in providing an equitable and high-quality education for students in poverty. Some progress has been made; however, only through focused and evidence-based approaches, tailored to meet each state's individual context, can we hope to meet our goal: Providing an equal opportunity for all children to achieve the American dream, regardless of their economic conditions.

Thank you for your consideration of these NCLB reauthorization design principles in your return to Congress later this fall. We sincerely appreciate your service and dedication to Iowa and look forward to your leadership on this important issue in the days to come.

With respect and admiration,



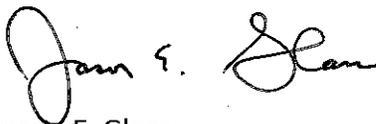
Tom Downs
Executive Director
Iowa Association of School Boards



Mary Jane Cobb
Executive Director
Iowa State Education Association



Dan Smith
Executive Director
School Administrators of Iowa



Jason E. Glass
Director & Chief Learner
Iowa Department of Education