



# **The Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) Reauthorization Advocacy Manual\***

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\*Adapted from the Student Peace Alliance, *Youth Promise Act Advocacy Manual*, available at [http://www.studentpeacealliance.org/uploads/2/9/4/4/29446231/ypa\\_lobbying\\_packet\\_for\\_spa\\_2.pdf](http://www.studentpeacealliance.org/uploads/2/9/4/4/29446231/ypa_lobbying_packet_for_spa_2.pdf).

# ESEA Quick Facts

**Summary:** The Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) was originally signed into law by President Lyndon Johnson in 1965 as part of the “War on Poverty.” The ESEA governs how \$23.3 Billion in federal education funding for grades K-12 is spent. It also attaches requirements and standards for states to meet achievement benchmarks. It was last signed into law as No Child Left Behind in 2002 by President George W. Bush. It expired in 2007. Congress has not been able to agree upon final passage of an ESEA reauthorization package.

In the House of Representatives, the lead sponsor of the ESEA Reauthorization bill, **the Student Success Act, H.R. 5**, is Chairman of the House Education and the Workforce Committee Rep. John Kline, (R-MN).

## The Education and the Workforce Committee:



**Chairman John Kline (R-MN)**



**Ranking Member Bobby Scott (D-VA)**

## Quick Facts:

**House Bill:** *The Student Success Act*, H.R. 5, Lead Sponsor Chairman John Kline (R-MN)

**Senate Bill:** Senator Alexander’s “Discussion Draft,” Lead Sponsor, Chairman Lamar Alexander (R-TN)/Sen. Alexander is currently negotiating a bipartisan bill with Ranking Democrat on the Senate HELP Committee, Senator Murray (D-WA).

## The Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions (HELP) Committee



**Chairman Lamar Alexander (R-TN)**



**Ranking Member Patty Murray (D-WA)**



# **Social Media Advocacy**

**Here are sample Social Media posts you can use in your advocacy.**

## **Facebook**

- Youth and parents support ESEA reauthorization that includes promoting family engagement in schools and ensuring that school disciplinary procedures comply with civil rights laws. Senator Murphy of Connecticut introduced the Supportive School Climate Act that guarantees these provisions. (Attach this link: <http://www.murphy.senate.gov/newsroom/press-releases/murphy-booker-and-reps-clark-davis-scott-introduce-bill-to-establish-positive-school-climate-for-students>)
- Senator Murphy of Connecticut introduces the Supportive School Climate Act. This bill would dedicate funding to support positive school climates and inclusive best discipline practices. (Attach this link: <http://www.dignityinschools.org/blog/dsc-supports-senator-murphys-supportive-school-climate-act>)

## **Twitter**

- We support @ChrisMurphyCT's Supportive School Climate Act. Looks 2 dedicate funding 2 discipline best practices bit.ly/1xvgbJJ #ESEA
- #ESEA reauthorization should include support for School Discipline practices like #RestorativeJustice.
- Communities are working hard for #ESEA reauthorization. We support @ChrisMurphyCT's Supportive School Climate Act. bit.ly/1xvgbJJ

## **Blogs**

**Here are links to DSC ESEA blogs you can use as templates to create a blog post for your organization.**

- DSC Supports Senator Murphy's Supportive School Climate Act <http://bit.ly/1xvgbJJ>
- Dignity in Schools Campaign Members Advocate for Bipartisan ESEA Bill to Improve School Climate <http://bit.ly/1wJQJQJ>.



DIGNITY IN SCHOOLS

# **Advocacy with Members of Congress**

## **Building a Relationship with Members of Congress**

The most effective way to get support for a bill or a policy is to meet with congressional staff, aides, or directly with Representatives and Senators. We have done this most recently through our DSC ESEA Days at the Capitol. It is important to commit to follow up in order to build upon initial communication and to develop relationships with allies and champions for school discipline reform and school climate improvements.

**If you reach out to a congressional office, let us know (by contacting Nancy Trevino with DSC at [nancy@dignityinschools.org](mailto:nancy@dignityinschools.org) and Janel George with LDF at [jgeorge@naacpldf.org](mailto:jgeorge@naacpldf.org))--we can provide updated materials as well as answer any questions that you may have.**

### **OUTLINE FOR A SAMPLE E-MAIL TO A MEMBER OF CONGRESS:**

- Introduce yourself AS A CONSTITUENT (I am a parent/student/advocate and I am your constituent).
- Introduce the member to the Dignity in Schools Campaign (I am a member of the Dignity in Schools Campaign, a coalition of 95 organizations from 24 states dedicated to ending school pushout and reforming overly punitive and exclusionary discipline practices. Instead of punitive discipline practices, we support inclusive practices like Social and Emotional Learning curricula and Schoolwide Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports, among others).
- Speak from your heart. Share any relevant personal story about why this issue is important to you. Your child was suspended expelled/from school. You were pushed out of school—how did it impact you? What were the consequences?
- Share some statistics on overly punitive discipline and school pushout (see talking points below).
- Call to Action: Thank the Senator or Representative for their support for school climate legislation (see current bills and how to search for cosponsors).
- Request that they respond to you, so that you know what position they will be taking on ESEA (i.e. supporting or opposing H.R. 5). This helps them to form an official stance. Ask them if they would be willing to sign a pledge opposing H.R. 5

and supporting a bill with federal protections and strong school climate/discipline reform provisions.

### **SAMPLE TALKING POINTS:**

**The Problem of School Pushout:** School pushout refers to the numerous and systemic factors that prevent or discourage young people from remaining on track to complete their education and has severe and lasting consequences for students, parents, schools, and communities. These factors include, among others, the failure to provide essential components of a high quality education, lack of stakeholder participation in decision-making, over-reliance on zero-tolerance practices and punitive measures such as suspensions and expulsions, over-reliance on law enforcement tactics and ceding of disciplinary authority to law enforcement personnel, and a history of systemic racism and inequality. These factors have an impact on all students, but have a disproportionate impact on historically disenfranchised youth.

- African American students are suspended and expelled at 3 times the rate of their white peers, despite data showing that they do not misbehave more frequently.
- African American children represent 18 percent of preschool enrollment, but 48 percent of children receiving more than one out-of-school suspension.
- When data is disaggregated by both race and gender, it shows that African-American girls are suspended at 6 times the rate of white girls (and more than most boys except for African American boys and Native American boys).
- Students with disabilities are more than twice as likely to receive an out-of-school suspension (13%) than students without disabilities (6%).
- African American students represent 16 percent of student enrollment, but they represent 27 percent of students referred to law enforcement and 31 percent of students subjected to a school-related arrest.
- Students with disabilities represent a quarter of students arrested and referred to law enforcement, even though they are only 13 percent of the overall student population.

### **Solutions:**

- Ensure that the reauthorization of ESEA includes support for inclusive and non-discriminatory school discipline practices, like Schoolwide Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (SWPBIS), Restorative practices, conflict resolution, and mediation.
- Support bills like Senator Murphy's *Supportive School Climate Act*, (S. 811) which would allow states to use federal funds to implement positive practices, including professional development opportunities in classroom management and cultural competency. It would also improve coordination of educational services between schools and correctional institutions.

- A study by the Center for Benefit-Cost Studies of Education found that for every \$1 schools spend on six commonly used social-emotional-learning programs, those interventions return on average \$11 worth of benefits to society.

## **SCHEDULING A MEETING WITH A CONGRESSIONAL OFFICE**

### **(LOCAL OR IN D.C.)**

#### **By Phone:**

- Make a list of what you want to say to the Scheduler and have it with you when you make the call to schedule a meeting.
- Check your Senator or Representative (Congressman/woman's) website. It will list the phone number for both the D.C. office and any other local office they have.
- Contact either the Washington, D.C. office or your local District office. Tell them who you are (again, remind them that you're a constituent), what organization you're with, and that you would like to schedule a meeting about ESEA. Let them know that DSC has submitted comment letters and you're hoping to follow up with an in-person meeting.
- Give them some possible dates/times for a meeting and tell them the names of who else would be attending.
- Schedule the meeting and confirm with them the day before by calling to make sure you're appointment didn't get bumped.

#### **By E-mail:**

- Call the local or DC office and ask for the name of the person with deals directly with education issues.
  - This will likely be a Legislative Assistant or Legislative Director.
- If you're calling a Representative's office, ask if their e-mail address is "standard House form," which means that it will be the staffer's: `firstname.lastname@mail.house.gov`. Some congressional offices will tell you that they cannot give out staffer's e-mail information, but if you have the staffer's first and last name, you can assume that it will fit the "standard House form."
- If you're calling a Senator's office, ask if the e-mail address is "standard Senate form," which means it will be `firstname_lastname@senator'slastname.senate.gov`. Usually Senate committee staffers will have a different e-mail format, which would be `firstname_lastname@help(Committee name).senate.gov`.
- Note in the e-mail that you would like to meet to discuss ESEA and provide dates that you will be available. Again, let them know when you're available and how many people will be present.

## **Sample Agenda for an ESEA Meeting (Also see meeting form):**

### **Introductions:**

- First, thank the aide or Congressperson for meeting with you.
- Everyone in the group should introduce themselves and say where they are from.
- Share a little bit about your organization and the work that you do.

### **Overview of ESEA:**

- Highlight key elements of ESEA and why it's important for school climate and school discipline (See Talking Points).
- Talk about why the bill is important to you, your organization, and the work that you do.
- Ask for an updated timeline on the progress of the bill—has it been scheduled for a vote?

### **Make the location connection:**

- If possible, provide some local/state statistics on school pushout to connect why discipline reform is important.
- This is another opportunity to discuss your local work and how passage of a strong ESEA bill can help your work (i.e. opportunities for community-based organizations to partner with schools and districts on discipline reform).

### **Make the Connection with the Representative/Senator:**

- By searching the member's website before the meeting, you can see if he/she has supported discipline reform or other programs that promote positive school climate in the past (i.e. school-based mental health services).
- You can thank the member for their support of discipline reform or positive school climates and emphasize how a strong ESEA bill should promote support for these issues.

### **Make the "Ask"**

- Ask the member or staffer if he/she will support a strong ESEA bill or oppose one that cuts back on federal oversight. Ask if there is any additional information/background that you can provide. If the staffer cannot give you an answer, make sure that you get his/her card and ask if you can follow up.

### **Closing the Meeting:**

- Thank the staffer/Representative/Senator for meeting with you.
- Confirm any arrangements for follow up and provide them with the name and contact information for a point person in your group.
- If there's time, take a picture with the staffer or member and be sure to provide to DSC staff!

**After the Meeting:**

- Send a thank you e-mail to the staffer (rather than a written e-mail, which could take weeks to make it through congressional security and screening).
- Follow up with any next steps that you've committed to.

**Other Resources:**

The Committee on Education & the Workforce Democrats have useful resources on ESEA Reauthorization on their website:

<http://democrats.edworkforce.house.gov/issue/elementary-and-secondary-education-act>.

- Including a Fact Sheet: What Parents Won't Know if H.R. 5 Passes:  
<http://democrats.edworkforce.house.gov/sites/democrats.edworkforce.house.gov/files/documents/H.R.%205%20Leaves%20Parents%20in%20The%20Dark.pdf>.

**UCLA Center for Civil Rights Remedies:** Schooldisciplinedata.org—includes searchable data on rates of discipline (i.e. suspensions, expulsions, etc.) broken down by elementary and secondary levels.