



July 26, 2021

Dear Chairwoman Murray and Ranking Member Burr:

On behalf of state education leaders, the Council of Chief State School Officers is pleased to provide input to inform the Senate Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions Committee on the reauthorization of the Education Sciences Research Act (ESRA). CCSSO is the nonpartisan, nationwide, nonprofit organization of public officials who head departments of elementary and secondary education in the states, the District of Columbia, the Department of Defense Education Activity, the Bureau of Indian Education and the five U.S. extra-State jurisdictions.

State education leaders rely upon federally-funded research support and technical assistance to ensure that education investments provide maximum benefit to students. The Institute of Education Science's data collection and research, the National Assessment Governing Board's administration of benchmark assessments, the Regional Educational Laboratories and Comprehensive Centers support of state educational agencies, and federally-funded education research activities authorized under ESRA are critical to ensure efficient and effective uses of limited education resources. In addition, grants to states for Statewide Longitudinal Data Systems (SLDS) are essential to state and local education evaluations and compliance with federal reporting requirements.

CCSSO supported the reauthorization of ESRA in 2015 under the Strengthening Education through Research Act (SETRA). As states and school districts now continue to work to develop and implement programs to alleviate the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic upon U.S. students, education research will be essential to implementing effective interventions to remedy the effects of interrupted learning and we encourage an update to SETRA to focus on COVID-19 relief and recovery.

SETRA added new statutory criteria to ensure that activities authorized under the legislation are rigorous, relevant, and useful for researchers, policymakers, practitioners, and the public to ensure that activities "[a]ddress significant challenges faced by practitioners." This change seeks to ensure that education research is useful to the field and impactful for students, which is particularly important at this time of rapid policy development and implementation. As schools and communities respond to COVID-19 and its effects upon students and communities, we encourage Congress to include an express focus on providing high-quality research and technical assistance to support COVID-19 relief and recovery activities and conduct rigorous evaluations of activities intended to remedy the impacts of COVID-19 upon student learning and wellness. This should be a key consideration throughout the reauthorization legislation and be reflected in authorizing language across programs.

In addition, State educational agencies are authorized under ESRA and SETRA to implement Statewide Longitudinal Data Systems, which provide key data about student characteristics and



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outcomes necessary to implement federal education programs, evaluate their impact, and inform policymakers. ESRA includes protections that ensure that student data privacy is well protected, and CCSSO strongly supports protecting student information. In order to reduce the burden of data collection and reporting upon states and school districts, we urge Congress to include provisions that expressly require the U.S. Department of Education to minimize the burden to states of federal data collection and reporting requirements and eliminate federal data requirements that do not demonstrate sufficient impact to justify their ongoing collection and reporting.

Finally, the National Assessment Governing Board, through the administration of the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) and other measures, provides national, comparable data about student achievement. As the Nation's Report Card, NAEP plays an important role to help state and district leaders understand student academic progress both within their respective states and districts and across the nation. For these reasons, CCSSO strongly supports the continued authorization of the Board to ensure transparency and inform decision-making at the state and local levels.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Peter Zamora", written in a cursive style.

Peter Zamora
Director of Federal Relations
Council of Chief State School Officers