



NEWS RELEASE

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CONTACT:

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Patrick Riccards
riccards@woodrow.org | (703) 298-8283

STATEMENT FROM WOODROW WILSON FOUNDATION PRESIDENT ARTHUR LEVINE ON CONGRESSIONAL PASSAGE OF EVERY STUDENT SUCCEEDS ACT

PRINCETON, N.J. (December 9, 2015) – The Woodrow Wilson National Fellowship Foundation today released the following statement from Foundation President Arthur Levine regarding the congressional passage of the reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, or the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA):

With both House and Senate approval of ESSA, Congress has clearly demonstrated that the success of school improvements depends largely on state leadership. Our state capitals have the capacity, authority, and responsibility to enact real education change, and ESSA ensures those states and localities are empowered to do what is necessary to ensure that all children receive a high-quality education in a classroom led by an exemplary educator.

As states look to meet the goals established by ESSA, it is essential they not lose sight of the importance of teacher quality and the role teacher education plays in ensuring the student outcomes we all seek. Every child – particularly those attending high-need schools – needs excellent teachers. Those teachers must be educated by effective preparation programs designed to meet the needs of both the schools and the students of tomorrow.

Whether in ESSA or in the upcoming Higher Education Act reauthorization, regulations governing teacher preparation should apply to all programs, whether they are traditional education schools or non-traditional education providers. Effective preparation, no matter who provides it, requires a strong academic program, a intensive clinical experience, and rigorous mentoring. There are no shortcuts to ensuring a new teacher is prepared for the challenges one faces in a 21st century classroom. And there are no shortcuts to improving student learning outcomes.

More than 90 percent of new teachers are still educated at universities, through traditional teacher education programs. ESSA seeks to replace current preparation models. However, it is a mistake to ignore the reality that most of our future educators will be prepared in traditional programs. Moving forward, the states need to support strong and promising teacher education programs and close failing programs. ESSA supports alternative non-university teacher education providers. This must go hand in hand with the closure of failing university teacher education programs. To do otherwise makes no financial sense.

Whether repairing or replacing existing educator preparation programs, improvements made through both ESSA and HEA, as well as the rigorous standards set by the Council for the

Accreditation of Educator Preparation, have enormous potential to increase the quality of future teachers and to raise both the floor and the ceiling for teacher education programs in the United States. The evolution of teacher education regulations has the power to ensure that teachers entering the profession are better prepared. States must lead in setting and implementing high standards for teacher education programs, use their authority to reauthorize existing programs, and plan for a unified system of teacher education including both universities and other providers, rather than act on each separately. And universities must embrace such change and see it as an opportunity to improve their institutions and the teacher profession as a whole.

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