

United States Senate

June 29, 2015

Chairman Lamar Alexander
Committee on Health, Education, Labor and
Pensions
428 Senate Dirksen Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

Ranking member Patty Murray
Committee on Health, Education, Labor and
Pensions
648 Senate Dirksen Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Chairman Alexander and Ranking Member Murray:

I commend your efforts to reauthorize the Elementary and Secondary Education Act. As you prepare for the upcoming floor consideration of the Every Child Achieves Act, I respectfully request you include language in the bill that will require state plans to include proposals for addressing the needs of dual status youth.

The term “dual status youth” refers to juveniles who come into contact with both the child welfare and juvenile justice systems and occupy various statuses in terms of their relationship to the two systems. A growing body of research has shown that dual status youth experience poor educational performance, higher recidivism rates, higher detention rates, disruptive living arrangements, and substantial behavioral health needs. Many at-risk children lack stable home lives and they are frequently funneled through the school to prison pipeline. We have a responsibility to ensure our nation’s most vulnerable children grow up to lead successful lives.

The Every Child Achieves Act requires states to submit plans to the Secretary of Education in order to receive funding for prevention and intervention programs for children and youth who are neglected, delinquent, or at-risk. I believe any such plan must contemplate the needs of dual status youth. Despite the profoundly poor outcomes experienced by this population, there is a significant lack of data available about dual status youth. That is why state plans should describe how state agencies will identify youth who have come in contact with both the child welfare system and juvenile justice system and improve practices and expand the evidence-based intervention services to reduce school suspensions, expulsions, and referrals to law enforcement.

Again, I commend your continued leadership on this important piece of legislation. If you have any questions, please contact my office at (202) 224-6221.

Sincerely,



Gary C. Peters
United States Senator