

August 26, 2013

The Honorable Tom Harkin
Chairman
Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions
Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Lamar Alexander
Ranking Member
Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions
Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Chairman Harkin and Ranking Member Alexander,

Together, the members of the organizations listed below represent tens of thousands of educators across the country. We write in strong support of the language in the Strengthening America's Schools Act (S.1094), which supports a well-rounded education. College, career, and citizenship readiness is not limited to proficiency in English language arts and math, but also includes comprehensive knowledge and skills in all disciplines required of students after high school graduation. Each student must receive equal access to a complete education that includes instruction in reading, math, science, arts, history, civics, finance, foreign languages, geography, health education, and physical education. A complete education ensures success in the modern workforce and is worthy of being a national priority to support global economic competitiveness.

Learning in each of these disciplines is essential for any graduate to be considered ready for college, career, and citizenship. Delivery of a comprehensive education must be reflected in standards, assessments, and accountability systems. Moreover, meaningful public reporting and accountability requirements regarding student achievement in each of these disciplines should be established at the school, district, and state levels. This would help ensure a strong commitment to providing all students with access to a well-rounded education. Of course, schools, local districts, and communities must also have the flexibility to customize education to meet their unique circumstances.

Each of the "covered subjects" listed in the definitions section—Sec. 4302 of S.1094, Supporting Successful, Well-Rounded Students—is crucial to a student's learning in its own right, and no one subject should be considered more important than another. The relationship between disciplines enhances learning and understanding for each student. Thus, we propose that your committee report contains language that emphasizes this concept and encourages states and districts to closely examine the need to support each discipline.

We also urge you to include language in the committee's report to ensure that those who review the well-rounded grant applications at the U.S. Department of Education be experts in the subjects or disciplines for the grants they review. Subject area expertise is crucial to the decision-making process.

We urge you to work together to continue the legislative progress toward a reauthorized Elementary and Secondary Education Act that will help to provide the necessary stability and long-term vision for our nation's education system. Our members are committed to the success of each learner, and we look forward to

continuing to work with you and your staff to ensure that federal education policy supports a comprehensive education for all of our students so that they are prepared for college, careers, and active citizenship.

CC: Members of the Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions

Alternate ROOTS

American Alliance for Health, Physical Education, Recreation, and Dance

American Composers Forum

American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages

American School Counselors Association

American School Health Association

American String Teachers Association

Americans for the Arts

ASCD

Asia Society

Association of Performing Arts Presenters

Campaign for the Civic Mission of Schools

Chamber Music America

Chorus America

Dance/USA

Directors of Health Promotion and Education

Educational Theatre Association

Educators for Social Responsibility

Fractured Atlas

HealthCorps

Joint National Committee on Languages

League of American Orchestras

National Alliance for Musical Theatre

National Art Education Association

National Association for Music Education

National Association of Latino Arts and Culture

National Association of Secondary School Principals

National Coalition for History

National Council for the Social Studies

National Dance Education Organization

National Performance Network

Network of Ensemble Theaters

New Music USA

Opera America

Pennsylvania State Multiple Languages Association

Performing Arts Alliance

Save the Children U.S. Programs

Society of Public Health Education

SPARK

Theatre Communications Group