September 12, 2013

Majority Leader Reid, Minority Leader McConnell, Chairman Harkin and Senators Durbin, Cornyn and Alexander:

On behalf of organizations representing state and local officials, we write to thank you for recent Senate Committee action on Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) reauthorization legislation and urge you to advance ESEA to the Senate floor.

In July, we were encouraged by passage of an ESEA reauthorization bill in the House of Representatives. We are hopeful that the Senate will pass legislation that builds on the work of the House and ultimately results in a bipartisan reauthorization of ESEA.

State governments, localities and schools need a long-term resolution for the issues raised by the current federal education law, the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB). More than 12 years after NCLB was enacted, it is time to rewrite the law.

In the absence of ESEA reauthorization, many states have sought flexibility through waivers offered by the U.S. Department of Education. However, waivers will only work for some states. Moreover, waivers only provide temporary relief from specific provisions of the law and often impose new criteria not formally authorized in NCLB or by Congress on states, school districts and schools. Only a full reauthorization of ESEA can support state and local innovation so that every student will be prepared for college or careers.

Despite the differences between House and Senate ESEA proposals, we urge each chamber to come together to agree on a common, bipartisan path forward to ensure a world class education for our nation’s children. We stand ready to work with you to ensure that every state, district, school and student may benefit from a federal elementary and secondary education law that works.
Sincerely,

Dan Crippen, Executive Director
National Governors Association

David Adkins, CEO and Executive Director
Council of State Governments

Clarence E. Anthony, Executive Director
National League of Cities

Chris Minnich, Executive Director
Council of Chief State School Officers

Thomas J. Gentzel, Executive Director
National School Boards Association

William T. Pound, Executive Director
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Matthew D. Chase, Executive Director
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Robert J. O’Neill, Executive Director
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Kristen J. Amundson, CEO and Executive Director
National Association of State Boards of Education