

May 14, 2013

The Honorable Michael Bennet
458 Russell Senate Office Building
U.S. Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Sen. Bennet,

We write in support of your bill, the Fiscal Fairness Act, which would fix the comparability loophole in Title I of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA). The bill would ensure that low-income students get the support that Congress intends them to receive.

Title I, especially its comparability provisions, is designed to give high-poverty schools the resources they need to help their students make strong academic progress. This supplementary money—on top of an equal funding base—should allow Title I schools to increase learning time, improve technology, expand mentorships for young teachers, and take other steps to help surmount the obstacles low-income children face. The key, however, is that the money be *supplementary*. Currently, the law requires districts to ensure that all schools—whether or not they receive Title I funds—are provided comparable resources *before* federal funds are added. This requirement is known as comparability.

But the comparability provision contains a loophole through which districts can shortchange their high-poverty schools. This loophole has the following effects:

- It deprives students in high-poverty schools of needed resources.
- It undercuts congressional intent.
- It blunts the effectiveness of the federal investment in Title I, thereby thwarting the wishes of taxpayers who support the program.

Your bill would close the loophole. Indeed, it would ensure that districts spend comparable amounts of per-pupil state and district funds in Title I schools as they do in non-Title I schools—*before* Title I dollars are allocated. It is a common-sense proposal that asks districts to respect the intent of Title I: to purchase the critical extras that low-income students need to catch up to their more fortunate peers.

Closing the comparability loophole will have a tangible, positive impact on low-income students and students of color all over the country. Therefore, we stand with you in support of the ESEA Fiscal Fairness Act.

Sincerely,

Advance Illinois
Center for American Progress Action Fund
Children's Defense Fund
Civic Builders
ConnCAN
Democrats for Education Reform
Education Reform Now

Forum for Youth Investment
Hope Street Group
Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights
League of Education Voters
League of United Latin American Citizens
NAACP Legal Defense & Educational Fund, Inc.
Mass Insight Education

National Council of La Raza
National Urban League
Oklahoma Business & Education Coalition
Stand for Children
Schott Foundation
The Education Trust
The Mind Trust
The New Teacher Project
United Negro College Fund
United Methodist Church, General Board of Church and Society