

November 9, 2015

The Honorable Lamar Alexander
455 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Patty Murray
154 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable John Kline
2439 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Bobby Scott
1201 Longworth House Office
Building Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Chairman Alexander, Ranking Member Murray, Chairman Kline, and Ranking Member Scott:

Our organizations share a deep commitment to effective and equitable educational data use, while steadfastly protecting all students' privacy and confidentiality. Federal investments over the past decade in state longitudinal data systems, statewide data coordination, and related professional development helped state and local leaders dramatically improve data access and use. This data infrastructure and capacity building has meaningfully improved teaching, learning, and decision-making by school, district, and state leaders.

Further work is needed, however, to expand and enhance the nation's education data capacity, including improving school systems' disparate privacy policies and practices. Promoting digital equity in our schools must necessarily include a focus on ensuring privacy protections for all learners, not just students attending schools with the professional development and other resources required to implement leading-edge data privacy and security requirements. Achieving this vision will require well-designed federal supports and targeted requirements that fully recognize – and do not ignore - the existing and rapidly evolving state and local privacy landscape.

As you finalize negotiations about the future of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA), we strongly urge you to maintain language embedded in the Every Child Achieves Act (S.1177) that proposes to establish a privacy committee to examine student data privacy issues. The privacy committee would provide a meaningful, bipartisan venue for studying the national landscape – including the numerous state privacy laws approved in 2014 and 2015 - and for developing specific policy recommendations for Congress and the Executive Branch.

Thank you for considering our request. We appreciate your leadership on behalf of the nation's students and their families.

Sincerely,

AASA, The School Superintendents Association

Alliance for Excellent Education

American Educational Research Association (AERA)

Association of California School Administrators – California School Boards Association Federal Partnership

Association of Educational Service Agencies (AESA)
Association of School Business Officials International
Consortium for School Networking (CoSN)
Data Quality Campaign (DQC)
Foundation for Excellence in Education
Future of Privacy Forum
International Association for K-12 Online Learning (iNACOL)
International Society for Technology in Education (ISTE)
Knowledge Alliance
National Association of Elementary School Principals (NAESP)
National Association of Secondary School Principals (NASSP)
National Association of State Boards of Education (NASBE)
National PTA
National Rural Education Advocacy Coalition
National Rural Education Association
Public Advocacy for Kids
Schools Interoperability Framework Association (SIF)
State Educational Technology Directors Association (SETDA)
Workforce Data Quality Campaign