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CONGRESSWOMAN SHEILA JACKSON LEE, OF TEXAS

COMMITTEE ON THE RULES

**STATEMENT IN SUPPORT OF AMENDMENTS TO
H.R. 5 THE "STUDENT SUCCESS ACT"**



JUNE 17, 2013

First, I would like to thank Chairman Sessions and Ranking Member Slaughter for holding today's hearing and affording me the opportunity to address the Rules Committee.

My amendments to H.R. 5, the "Student Success Act," are simple and are an important addition to this bill. I believe that my amendments to H.R. 5 can be supported by every member of this Committee.

Jackson Lee Amendment #75 “~~North Forest Amendment~~”

I appreciate the Rules Committee consideration of Jackson Lee Amendment 75. This amendment directs the Secretary of Education to conduct a study and produce a report to Congress with recommendations regarding the advisability of authorizing a state education authority to close a school district over the opposition of a locally elected school board, and regarding best practices governing the exercise of authority by a state education agency in monitoring, supervising and controlling underperforming school districts with particular emphasis on rural and underrepresented school districts.

My Congressional district once included the North Forest Independent School District, which was closed by the Texas Education Agency on July 1, 2013.

The decision to close North Forest Independent School District by the Texas Education Association displayed a reckless disregard for the children of North Forest Independent School District. There was no reason to close the school district and to deprive local residents of the North Forest Independent School District and dissolving the locally elected 7-member NFISD school board. All of the members of the former North Forest Independent School board were African American.

In making the decision to close the district, the Texas Education Agency has taken a “guillotine” approach to resolving the problems associated with the North Forest Independent School District—an

approach that was wholly unnecessary given the progress the district has made as well as the availability of viable and less disruptive alternatives, including a proposed partnership between North Forest Independent School District and local public charter schools that was announced on March 8, 2013.

The FACTS about NFISD

1. The North Forest Independent School District electoral district has 50,000 registered voters whose voting power will be diluted because they will be absorbed into the Houston Independent School District but no additional seats are being added to the Houston Independent School District board.
2. There was no reason to close the North Forest Independent School District since it is solvent, has received awards for excellence and has received significant outside funding;
3. The North Forest Independent School District proposed a sound alternative plan to the Texas Education Agency that was applauded by the U.S. Department of Education and supported by experts like Dr. Rodney Paige, former Secretary of the Department of Education;
4. The North Forest Independent School District is the victim of an unfair process since there is no provision for an appeal of an adverse decision by the Governor, who appears to have unfettered discretion.

There must be a remedy to prevent this from happening to any other school districts.

Jackson Lee Amendment # 63 **“Anti-Bullying Amendment”**

Jackson Lee Amendment #63 would address the need to reduce school violence and bullying in schools. The threat of violence is cited as a reason for school delinquency and dropout rates among high risk students. This amendment would support accountability-based programs and activities designed to enhance school safety, which may include research into bullying prevention, cyber bullying prevention, and gang prevention programs, as well as intervention programs to stop bullying in schools.

Jackson Lee Amendment #64 **“Girl’s STEM Amendment”**

This amendment provides grants to female college and university students taking courses in science, technology, engineering, or mathematics to mentor female high school students who are enrolled in science, technology, engineering, or math as part of a dual enrollment program.

The Dual Enrollment program allows exceptional high school junior and senior students the opportunity to earn college credits, while attending high school. The credits earned are transferable to many four-year colleges or universities.

My amendment would offer tutoring but more importantly mentoring support to high school girls who are enrolled in a college or university STEM class.

Jackson Lee Amendment # 61 “**At-Risk Students Amendment**”

Jackson Lee Amendment #61 would direct states with insufficient funding to target funds to schools serving neglected, delinquent, migrant students, English learners, at-risk students, and Native Americans, to increase academic achievement of such students. The purpose of the Amendment is to make the best use of the funds available to focus resources on students with the greatest need.

In June of this year more than half of those who are called baby boomers had retired. The nation needs well educated people to fill these jobs.

The nation’s first line of national defense is a well educated population. Much of the nation’s defense depends on what is developed and created by STEM jobs. It is also important that men and women serving in the armed forces have a basic working knowledge of STEM to succeed. For these reasons, it is vital that Congress puts STEM at the top of our education priorities.

Jackson Lee Amendment #62 “**Due Process Amendment**”

Jackson Lee Amendment #62 would require that each State plan for school districts will include assurances that no State or local official, appointed or elected, will have the authority to close or merge a local educational agency without due process.

I would also like to request that the Rules Committee find in order the Davis, Clarke and Jackson Lee Amendment #41. This amendment would delay elimination of the 1% cap on alternative assessments for students with significant cognitive delays until the Secretary of Education determines that removing the cap will not result in overreliance on the use of less rigorous assessments for students with disabilities.

I urge all members of the Rules Committee to support the amendments. Thank you.