

Statement of Rep. John Kline (R-MN)
Chairman, U.S. House Committee on Education and the Workforce
Rules Committee Consideration of H.R. 5, the *Student Success Act*
July 17, 2013

Good afternoon Chairman Sessions, Ranking Member Slaughter, and members of the committee. I appreciate the opportunity to testify in support of H.R. 5, the *Student Success Act*. This important legislation will rewrite federal elementary and secondary education law to help ensure all children have access to a quality education.

For more than a decade *No Child Left Behind* has been the law of the land. The law was the result of a well-intended effort to close achievement gaps and improve the educational outcomes of students. I am sure most – if not all – of you have visited schools in your districts, and no doubt you quickly learned the law has failed to deliver the results we'd hoped.

A one-size-fits-all accountability system has made it more difficult for state and local leaders to accurately measure and improve student learning. The federal bureaucracy has grown to more than 80 programs tied to K-12 classrooms, burying schools under a mountain of red tape. Antiquated rules value tenure and credentials above a teacher's ability to actually *teach*. And student achievement remains flat – even though the United States spends more in per-pupil expenditures on education than any other country in the world.

To make matters worse, in 2011 the Obama administration began issuing temporary waivers to states in exchange for adopting its preferred education reforms. Now 39 states and the District of Columbia are beholden to federal K-12 requirements put in place by the Secretary of Education without input from Congress.

These are just a few of the problems plaguing our education system today. More spending and more federal intervention are not delivering enough progress in student learning. Taxpayer dollars are being squandered, school leaders are frustrated, parents are losing hope, and students are losing out on the education they need for a brighter future.

Congress must reauthorize the law and fix the mistakes of the past. Toward that end, the Education and the Workforce Committee has held numerous hearings and examined the testimonies of dozens of witnesses. We've spoken with principals, teachers, parents, state officials, and other education leaders about the reforms necessary to change the failed status quo.

The *Student Success Act* reflects what we've learned and embodies four principles vital to a stronger education system in which all students have the opportunity to succeed.

First, we must reduce the federal footprint in our nation's classrooms. The bill eliminates more than 70 duplicative and ineffective programs and creates a new Local Academic Flexible Grant that will support education priorities set by local leaders. Furthermore, the legislation reins in the authority of the Secretary of Education, ending the practice of coercing states into adopting the secretary's personal education agenda.

Second, we must restore control to our state and local education leaders. H.R. 5 repeals the onerous federal accountability system and frees states to implement an accountability system tailored to the needs of their schools, as well as develop their own policies to improve failing schools. The legislation sets broad parameters to achieve this goal, but ends one-size-fits-all requirements – recognizing states know what’s needed in their local communities better than we do.

Third, to improve the quality of education in our classrooms we must support better teachers. The legislation will shift the focus away from credentials and tenure to state- or district-led strategies that will help parents know whether their schools’ educators are getting the job done. Local communities will have the tools and information they need to ensure effective teachers are in every classroom.

Finally, to help students succeed we must empower parents. No parent wants their child trapped in a failing school. The *Student Success Act* provides parents more freedom and choice by reauthorizing and strengthening the Charter School Program, maintaining support for the Magnet School program, and allowing school districts to take advantage of free tutoring and greater options for public school choice.

These and other positive reforms in H.R. 5 are essential to fixing a broken education system. Continuing the status quo is not an option. In fact, congressional action is more urgent in light of President Obama’s waiver scheme that has allowed his administration to temporarily rewrite the law through executive fiat – creating confusion and uncertainty in states and school districts across the country. Teachers, parents, and students deserve better than short-term gimmicks; they deserve a new law.

The American people have been waiting for Congress to act for more than five years. It’s time to move forward. The House must work its will and I look forward to working out our differences with the Senate. Only then can Congress send a bill to the president. I encourage the committee to support the *Student Success Act* and a structured rule for its consideration on the House floor. Thank you for your time and I am happy to answer any questions you may have.