

EXTENSIONS OF REMARKS

CONFERENCE REPORT ON S. 1177, STUDENT SUCCESS ACT

SPEECH OF

HON. SUZANNE BONAMICI

OF OREGON

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, December 2, 2015

Ms. BONAMICI. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in support of the Every Student Succeeds Act. This legislation represents a significant bipartisan achievement and one that is long overdue.

For 14 years, our nation's public schools have operated under a well-intentioned but flawed education law, the No Child Left Behind Act. This law set aspirational goals for student learning, and it helped call attention to persistent achievement gaps between groups of students. But No Child Left Behind's rigid measure of academic achievement—that is, the requirement that schools demonstrate adequately yearly progress—and the law's one-size-fits-all interventions for low-performing schools proved to be unworkable.

The unfortunate consequences of No Child Left Behind's inflexible requirements have plagued schools in northwest Oregon and in communities across the country. As states were forced to demonstrate leaps in student achievement, an era of high-stakes testing took much of the joy out of teaching and learning. The drive for higher test scores pressured many schools to narrow their curricular offerings. Schools shifted resources away from arts and music, history, and foreign languages to bolster the tested subjects.

This is the day that students, teachers, school board members, and families across the country have been waiting for—Congress has finally reached an agreement to leave behind No Child Left Behind.

The Every Student Succeeds Act is not perfect legislation, but reaching a bipartisan agreement requires compromise. For example, the bill eliminates or consolidates nearly 50 education programs. Although some of these programs were unfunded, merging the others creates genuine concerns about some states disinvesting in current priorities, like physical education, and spending the money elsewhere. The bill maintains the Secretary of Education's authority to hold states accountable to the law, but it also places new restrictions on the Secretary that raise questions about the federal government's ability to act.

The Every Student Succeeds Act provides a great deal of discretion to states and school districts to improve schools where students are underperforming. Certainly returning control to states and school districts is welcome. Local school boards, superintendents, and educators are best equipped to design school improvement activities that will be effective in their communities. Yet the bill could have done more to make sure that schools make timely improvements when subgroups of students, such as English learners, students of color, low-income students, and students of disabilities, continue to lag behind their peers.

Despite these concerns, the Every Student Succeeds Act represents a significant improvement for our nation's students and schools. The bill authorizes increased funding, which is especially important because more than half of our country's public school students now come from low-income households. The bill rejects a proposal to make Title I funding "portable," which would have diverted funding from communities with high concentrations of poverty to affluent school districts. And the bill includes a maintenance-of-effort requirement to help make sure states are adequately funding their schools.

The Every Student Succeeds Act also eliminates No Child Left Behind's federal accountability system and directs states to design systems for identifying schools in need of additional support. Importantly, the bill puts in place meaningful requirements for the accountability systems designed by states, including a requirement that state systems give substantial consideration to academic achievement and trigger action in any school where subgroups of students are underperforming. In this way, the Every Student Succeeds Act remains true to the civil rights legacy of the original Elementary and Secondary Education Act. The law will continue to require states to identify achievement gaps between groups of students and target resources to schools that need more support to close achievement gaps.

Importantly, the bill also reduces testing and the high stakes associated with statewide exams. The bill requires states to evaluate schools using multiple measures of student learning, so schools will not be held accountable for test scores alone. Additionally, the Every Student Succeeds Act establishes a pilot program for some states to develop alternative assessment systems. I am particularly pleased that the bill includes language from the Support Making Assessments Reliable and Timely (SMART) Act, bipartisan legislation I authored to help reduce testing. This provision gives resources to districts to eliminate the unnecessary or duplicative assessments that proliferated under No Child Left Behind. This provision also helps districts make better use of assessments by speeding the delivery of assessment results to educators, students, and families and by giving educators more time to plan in response to assessment data.

The Every Student Succeeds Act includes support for well-rounded education. I worked to include a provision in this section to make clear that schools can use federal resources to integrate arts and music into STEM courses. STEAM education, which combines arts and music with STEM subjects, educates both halves of students' brains; it teaches them to think creatively while they develop technical skills. Highly-skilled students who are also able to develop one-of-a-kind solutions to problems will excel in an economy that values innovation.

Overall, the Every Student Succeeds Act strengthens our nation's system of public education. The bill correctly recognizes that teach-

ers and principals are skilled professionals who know what is best for their students. At the same time, the bill puts in place common-sense requirements to improve achievement among students who have historically been underserved by public education. In other words, the bill strikes the appropriate balance of returning decision making to states and local communities without diluting the federal government's role in upholding our country's promise to deliver equal educational opportunities and outcomes to all students.

I would like to thank Chairman KLINE, Ranking Member SCOTT, Chairman ALEXANDER, and Ranking Member MURRAY for their tremendous leadership on this bill. The Every Student Succeeds Act is moving forward with strong bipartisan, bicameral support because these leaders were willing to find common ground for the good of our country's students and educators.

I have visited schools throughout my district and spoken with educators and students in urban and rural communities. In each community I visit, I am reminded of the urgency of efforts to end the test-and-punish culture created by No Child Left Behind. It is a great honor to be able to support the Every Student Succeeds Act to chart a better path forward for our country's educators and students. I encourage all of my colleagues to join me in supporting the bill.

RECOGNIZING THE CONTRIBUTIONS OF DANIEL PEARSON TO THE HOUSE COMMITTEE ON SCIENCE, SPACE, AND TECHNOLOGY

HON. EDDIE BERNICE JOHNSON

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, December 9, 2015

Ms. EDDIE BERNICE JOHNSON of Texas. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize the service of a valued staff member of the Committee on Science, Space, and Technology, Doctor Daniel Pearson. Dr. Pearson has served on Capitol Hill for the past quarter century, most recently as the Minority Staff Director for the Oversight Subcommittee.

Dr. Pearson came to the Committee with a PhD in Political Science from the University of Washington and a keen interest in public service. His commitment has always been to good public policy and integrity in government rather than simply partisan politics. That commitment is exemplified by the fact that he has worked effectively for both Republican and Democratic Members of Congress over his congressional career.

In the early 1990s, Dr. Pearson led investigations and oversight activities for Congressman Sherry Boehlert (R-NY). He also worked for former Committee Chairman George Brown (D-CA), Democratic Ranking Member Ralph Hall, and former Chairman Bart Gordon prior to becoming Minority staff director for the

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