



April 13, 2015

The Honorable Lamar Alexander
Chairman, HELP Committee
U.S. Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Patty Murray
Ranking Member, HELP Committee
U.S. Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Alexander and Senator Murray:

Thank you for your bipartisan efforts to reauthorize the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA). We are writing to express our strong support for Senator Bennet's teacher leadership amendment. This amendment would create opportunities for outstanding teachers to grow as leaders while remaining in the classroom. Teacher leadership is a smart investment that makes a real difference for teachers, students, and schools. When teachers grow, their students learn. Empowering teachers to take on leadership positions will also do the following:

- **Improve student learning.** Teacher leadership contributes to teacher growth and learning. Instructional teacher leadership teams have been created to improve student learning by first improving teacher instruction.
- **Improve teacher quality.** Teacher expertise is an important foundation for improving teaching and learning. Effective professional development is led by expert teachers sharing best practices, modeling instructional strategies, supporting new teachers and collaborating with their peers.
- **Recruit, retain, and reward effective teachers.** Teachers want to work in schools that are designed with their success in mind. When teachers have a voice around key decisions that affect teaching and student success, they have a direct ownership in outcomes. Teacher empowerment is key to recruitment and retention.
- **Extend principal and district capacity.** The principal's instructional leadership can be amplified when teachers assume more influential roles through instructional leadership teams. This shared leadership can increase capacity at all levels.

Empowering teachers to take on leadership positions will improve the retention of excellent teachers by providing them a career ladder while keeping them in the classroom. We know this to be the case because we have seen it happen through Teach Plus' Turnaround Teacher Teams (T3) initiative, which has had dramatic success in closing achievement gaps and improving student outcomes in high-poverty schools, and we have seen it in New Leaders' training and support for teacher leaders and principals, where great leadership, in classrooms and across schools, strengthens teaching, boosts student learning, and accelerates school transformation.

Sincerely,

Teach Plus New Leaders Center for American Progress Democrats for Education Reform