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Statewide Parent Advocacy Network, Inc.

STATEWIDE PARENT ADVOCACY NETWORK OF NEW JERSEY (SPAN) SUMMARY OF PRINCIPLES FOR NCLB REAUTHORIZATION

The Statewide Parent Advocacy Network of New Jersey (SPAN) has adopted the following key principles for reauthorization of the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB).

- 1. Parent Involvement:** NCLB's individual and systemic parent involvement provisions must be strengthened. There must be a private cause of action, such as exists in the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), when parent involvement provisions or children's rights are violated. The U.S. Department of Education must provide training and enforcement of parent involvement provisions. Parent training and education must be strengthened; funding for Parent Information Resource Centers must be continued and expanded, and, like Parent Training and Information Centers (PTIs), PIRC boards should be required to consist of a majority of parents to be served by NCLB. The technical assistance provider for PIRCs should also be a majority-parent Board organization.
- 2. Expectations and Accountability:** There must be no weakening of expectations or accountability for subgroups, including children of color, children living in poverty, children with limited English literacy, or children with disabilities. NCLB must require that all students, regardless of race, language, income level, or disability, are part of state accountability systems. The U.S. Department of Education's regulations and/or guidance that weakens accountability for students with disabilities and students with limited English proficiency must be specifically revoked by the reauthorized statute.
- 3. Supplemental Services:** The supplemental services provisions must be revised. Supplemental services should be available before public school choice. There must be specific criteria for supplemental services providers to ensure that they provide high quality services. There must be equal access to the full variety of supplemental services providers for all students, including students who speak languages other than English and students with disabilities. U.S. Department of Education "guidance" allowing districts to provide less access to supplemental services providers and/or public school choice options for English language learners and students with disabilities must be specifically revoked by the reauthorized statute. Supplemental services must be available on site so that all children who are eligible for such services can access them. For-profit companies should not be eligible to provide supplemental services.
- 4. State Standards and Assessment Systems:** There must be independent, expert review of state standards and assessment systems to ensure consistent quality across states. The current system discourages states from establishing high expectations and penalizes those states that set higher standards. States must be assisted to develop more valid and authentic assessments that measure what all students know and are able to do. Universal design must be used in developing state standards, curriculum and assessments. The reauthorization process should revisit the issue of how many grades should be required to be assessed every year. The accountability "n" must be made more consistent across states, and states must be prohibited from having a different "n" for students with disabilities than for other subgroups.
- 5. Highly Qualified Teachers:** The U.S. Department of Education's regulations and guidance weakening the requirements for highly qualified teachers must be specifically revoked by the reauthorized statute. Highly qualified teachers, who have both content knowledge and skills to teach diverse learners, must be required for all students, including all students with disabilities. Funding must be provided to support HQT.
- 6. Bilingual Education:** NCLB's inappropriate, non-research-based requirements to assess English language learners in English and to remove children from bilingual education programs within three years must be revised to reflect research findings on the value of bilingual education and the importance of all children knowing at least two languages. Children in U.S. schools who know another language should receive instruction that helps them to maintain and strengthen literacy in their home language as well as in English. This is critical to the future of the U.S. economy.
- 7. Funding:** Sufficient funding to effectively implement NCLB's provisions must be provided to states and districts.