

Thank you for the opportunity to provide input on the U.S. Senate Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions (HELP) Committee’s work to reauthorize the Higher Education Act (HEA).

New Leaders is a nonprofit organization that develops dedicated, skilled leaders at every level of our education system—from teacher leaders to principals and their supervisors—equipping them to elevate instruction and achievement across classrooms, schools, and districts. Since 2000, we have trained 3,200 outstanding school leaders who reach 500,000 students annually. New Leaders knows great leadership: according to the RAND Corporation, we are the principal preparation program with the strongest evidence of positive impact on student achievement.ⁱ

More than a decade of research shows—and our experience confirms—that leadership changes everything. School leaders account for 25 percent of a school’s impact on student learning,ⁱⁱ and an above-average principal can improve student achievement by 20 percentage pointsⁱⁱⁱ. In fact, a landmark study found “virtually no documented instances of troubled schools being turned around without intervention by a powerful leader.”^{iv}

The bipartisan Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) took significant steps to elevate the importance of leadership^v—and states have responded with universal agreement, including commitments in their state plans to invest federal dollars in school leadership^{vi}.

A reauthorized HEA can build on this moment and help advance effective, sustainable teaching, improve student outcomes, and close achievement gaps by similarly supporting state and local efforts to get a well-prepared, well-supported principal in every school.

As the Committee works to revise and strengthen the HEA, we encourage you to consider the following upgrades to current law:

- **Thoughtfully include provisions to help strengthen leadership**, especially in the Teacher Quality Partnerships (TQP) program. Under current law, TQP grantees may apply for funding to support principal development activities only if it is paired with a project focused on teacher preparation, severely limiting the program’s ability to support strong school leadership models. Moreover, TQP could better support leadership development opportunities for teachers, which are not explicitly supported under current law.
- **Foster outcomes-focused teacher and leader preparation** by strengthening and streamlining program data reporting requirements; by requiring that Title II report cards include data on both teacher and school leader preparation programs; and by directing funds to evidence-based programs that, consistent with the definition in ESEA section 8101(44), measurably improve student achievement and other relevant outcomes.
- **Support a wide range of evidence-based educator preparation programs**, including teacher and principal preparation programs not housed at universities. A reauthorized HEA could foster innovation by allowing nonprofits as well as grow-your-own programs run by school districts to apply for funding provided they meet the same high bar for quality as other eligible programs.
- **Encourage the best leaders to serve the schools and children most in need** by opening up financial incentives (*e.g.*, TEACH grants and teacher loan forgiveness) to school leaders. Research has found that financial incentives for effective teachers can advance equity and drive student achievement gains,^{vii} and in places where such incentives exist for school leaders there is evidence that students are progressing more rapidly than their peers and that achievement gaps are closing^{viii}—findings that helped spur the Teacher and School Leader Incentive Program (TSLIP). A reauthorized HEA can expand upon the strategies promoted by TSLIP and other ESSA programs by using financial incentives to encourage many more outstanding leaders to serve the schools and students most in need.

Along with this cover letter, we are including for the Committee’s consideration specific recommendations for incorporating these concepts into a reauthorized HEA along with a short fact sheet.

Thank you, once again, for the opportunity to provide feedback. If you have any questions about these comments, please contact policyteam@newleaders.org.

ⁱ Herman, R., Gates, S. M., Chavez-Herrerias, E. R., and Harris, M. (updated 2017). *School Leadership Interventions Under the Every Student Succeeds Act: Evidence Review*. The RAND Corporation. Retrieved from http://www.rand.org/pubs/research_reports/RR1550-2.html.

ⁱⁱ Leithwood, K., Seashore Louis, K., Anderson, S., & Wahlstrom, K. (2004). *How leadership influences student learning: A review of research for the Learning from Leadership Project*. New York, NY: The Wallace Foundation. Retrieved from <http://www.wallacefoundation.org/knowledge-center/Pages/How-Leadership-Influences-Student-Learning.aspx>.

ⁱⁱⁱ Marzano, R. J., Waters, T., & McNulty, B. A. (2005). *School leadership that works: From research to results*. Alexandria, VA: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.

^{iv} Leithwood, K., Seashore Louis, K., Anderson, S., & Wahlstrom, K. (2004).

^v New Leaders. (2016). *Prioritizing Leadership: Opportunities in ESSA for Chief State School Officers*. Retrieved from http://newleaders.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/10/PrioritizingLeadership_OpportunitiesESSAChiefStateSchoolOfficers.pdf?vsmid=2646&vcid=3.

^{vi} New Leaders. (2018). *Prioritizing Leadership: An Analysis of State ESSA Plans*. Retrieved from http://newleaders.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/02/2018.NL_ESSA-State-Plan-Policy-Brief-FINAL.pdf.

^{vii} Tooley, Melissa. (2013). "Is Money Enough to Keep More High-Quality Teachers in High-Need Schools?" *New America*. Retrieved from <https://www.newamerica.org/education-policy/edcentral/is-money-enough-to-keep-more-high-quality-teachers-in-high-need-schools/>.

^{viii} For example, in Denver Public Schools, where principals receive financial incentives to work in schools serving large populations of children from low-income families, students with disabilities, English learners, and highly-mobile youth, recent dramatic gains in student achievement were propelled by improvement on the part of students attending these "hard-to-staff" schools. Source: Asmar, Melody. (2017). "Denver Public Schools posts record gains on latest state tests." *Chalkbeat Colorado*. Retrieved from <https://www.chalkbeat.org/posts/co/2017/08/17/denver-public-schools-posts-record-gains-on-latest-state-tests/>.