

July 7, 2014

The Honorable Jack Reed
728 Hart Senate Office Building
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Reed,

On behalf of First Focus Campaign for Children, a bipartisan organization that advocates directly to make children a priority in policy and budget decisions, I'm writing to express our strong support for the Core Opportunity Resources for Equity and Excellence Act (S.2557), and to thank you for introducing this important legislation that will help close academic achievement gaps by increasing every child's access to the resources necessary for learning.

The recently released Civil Rights Data Collection by the U.S. Department of Education revealed stunning gaps in access to the basic components that lead to academic achievement for students. For example, 20 percent of high school students attend a school with no school counselor while between 10 and 25 percent of high schools do not offer more than one of the core courses in math and science. Additionally, students of color and English language learners attend schools with higher proportions of inexperienced teachers than their white and native English-speaking peers. To make matters worse, federal accountability systems require all schools and students to reach the same achievement levels despite unequal access to essential resources for educational excellence.

The Core Opportunity Resources for Equity and Excellence Act would change accountability standards to include those resources that every child needs to succeed in school. This would greatly expand access to resources such as specialized support teams, appropriate class sizes, up-to-date class materials, and support staff such as school counselors. By recognizing the ingredients necessary for an excellent education, this legislation addresses the core issues facing too many students of color, students with disabilities, English language learners, and students from low-income families. Closing the access gap to these essential resources will help close academic achievement gaps.

Thank you for introducing this important piece of legislation, we look forward to working with you on this bill. If you have any further questions please contact Kevin Lindsey, Senior Director, Education Policy, at KevinL@firstfocus.net.

Sincerely,



Bruce Lesley
President