April 14, 2015

The Honorable Lamar Alexander
Chair
Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions
U.S. Senate

The Honorable Patty Murray
Ranking Member
Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions
U.S. Senate

Dear Chairman Alexander and Ranking Member Murray:

As the Senate Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions Committee prepares to advance legislation to reauthorize the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) later this month, our organizations welcome the opportunity to offer our recommendations on several critical policy matters. We are a broad alliance of education, business, and professional organizations that is strongly committed to the goal of elevating the education of all students in the science, technology, engineering, and mathematic (STEM) subjects as a national priority as reflected through education reforms, policies to drive innovation, and federal and state spending priorities.

In today’s economy, strong STEM skills are a central element of a well-rounded education and every student needs to have a strong foundation in these subjects in order to land and succeed in virtually any job – from the shop floor to the research lab to the board room. Further, the best, most highly paying jobs are nearly all in the STEM fields. As you revise ESEA, we hope you will set a high bar for our nation’s schools in preparing students for the challenges of today’s increasingly competitive world.

We urge you to incorporate two fundamental concepts into your reauthorization proposals:

First, the accountability framework of ESEA should include a requirement that states continue to assess student performance in mathematics and science and that states be required to adopt rigorous standards in these subjects that are aligned to college and career readiness. While we recognize that one of the goals of a reauthorization will be to provide states with greater flexibility on many levels, we also consider it a fundamental federal responsibility to ensure that we are accurately measuring and monitoring student learning for all students in the subjects that are essential to their success.

Second, we strongly urge you to give high priority to funding for STEM education-related activities in elementary and secondary school teacher quality, recruitment, retention, and professional development programs administered through the U.S. Department of Education (DoEd). We have long supported the DoEd Math and Science Partnership Program (Title II.B in current law), which provides the sole source of dedicated funding at DoED to support professional development activities for STEM educators in every state and has shown excellent results in independent evaluations.
If we are going to enable our students to compete in the global economy we must maintain a strong federal commitment to improve teaching and learning in the critical STEM fields. We look forward to working with you and your colleagues to ensure that STEM education is a national priority – as Congress has repeatedly agreed it should be.

Respectfully,

STEM Education Coalition
American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education
American Chemical Society
American Society for Engineering Education
American Society of Civil Engineers
ASME
Campaign for Environmental Literacy
Education Development Center
Hands on Science Partnership
IEEE-USA
McREL International
Measured Progress
National Council of Teachers of Mathematics
National Science Teachers Association
Abercrombie Academy
Addictive Science
Aeronautical Repair Station Association
American Association of Physics Teachers
American Association of University Women (AAUW)
American Astronomical Society
American Career College
American Geophysical Union
American Institute of Physics
American Physical Society
Arizona Science Teachers Association
Arkansas Science Teachers Association
Associated Equipment Distributors
Association of Science-Technology Centers
ASTRA, The Alliance for Science & Technology Research in America
Augustus F. Hawkins Foundation
AviationEd
Aviation Technician Education Council
AZ ASCD
AzTEA Arizona Education Technology and Education Association
Beard Boy Productions
Bikers for Bots
The Boeing Company
Bose McKinney & Evans LLP
Cactus Moon Education
California Science Teachers Association
California STEM Learning Network Computing Research Association
Deblar & Associates, Inc
El Reno (OK) Public Schools
Flight Science Aero Laboratories
HASTI the Hoosiers Association of Science Teachers, Inc
HMC Architects
HUNSTEM (Houston Urban Network for Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics)
IEEE-USA
iMAGINE Upstate
In Reach, Inc
International Technology and Engineering Educators Association
Kendall Hunt Publishing
Kentucky Science Teachers Association (KSTA)
Latinos in Tech Innovation and Social Media (LATISM)
League of United Latin American Citizens
Learn to Discover
LearnOnLine, Inc
Louisiana Association of Science Leaders
Louisiana Science Teachers Association (LSTA)
Magnet Schools of America
National Alliance for Partnerships in Equity (NAPE)
National Association of Biology Teachers
National Association of Geoscience Teachers (NAGT)
National Center of Technological Literacy
National Council for Advanced Manufacturing
National Education Association
National Institute of Building Sciences
National Science Education Leadership Association
Nevada School of Professional Studies
New York Hall of Science
NY Sun Works
Oracle
Path 4 NC Kids
Samueli Foundation
Science Explorers
Science Teachers of Missouri
SpiriTED
STEM Fuse
STEMfinity
Teach For America
TechsCool
Tennessee Junior Academy of Science
Triangle Coalition for STEM Education
Tuskegee University
Universal Collaborations
Upstate SC STEM Collaborative
Utica College
Vital Link
Washington STEM
Winston-Salem/Forsyth County Schools, Winston-Salem, North Carolina
Young Professional Institute
Youth Adult Library Services Association
Youth Science Center