

2017 Legislative Priorities

The National Network of State Teachers of the Year (NNSTOY) annually develops its legislative priorities based on a federal policy survey of its members. Highlights of that survey reveal four key priority areas for survey respondents: educational equity, teacher leadership, social and emotional learning, and vouchers and school funding. Our legislative priorities are informed by the perspectives of the exemplary educators who make up the NNSTOY membership and serve in every state, every subject area and field, every grade level, and in rural, urban and suburban areas.

I. **APPROPRIATIONS**

Continue funding for federal education programs at the current FY 2017 level or higher

- All core K-12 programs, including Title I of ESSA and Part B of IDEA are critical to ensuring equity for our nation's students and must be adequately funded at least at the FY 2017 level.
- Continued funding for Title II of ESSA at the \$2.3 billion level is needed to ensure full implementation of ESSA and address the inequitable distribution of effective and experienced teachers. Title II of ESSA provides the core support for the development and support of state and local teacher leadership roles and can be used for anti-bias professional development for teachers.

II. **IMPLEMENTATION OF ESSA**

Provide oversight and support to ensure robust implementation of the Every Student Succeeds Act

- States and districts are utilizing their newly granted authority under ESSA to implement the new law; they are required to secure extensive stakeholder feedback in developing and implementing those plans. Yet many expert teachers report they are not involved and not being heard.
- NNSTOY believes that social emotional learning should be an important aspect of the implementation of the new law, as SEL skills are critical to student success; however, states should be cautious in using SEL as an indicator of teacher or school success; adequate Title II ESSA funds are critical to expanding SEL training for educators.

III. SCHOOL CHOICE

Do not cut existing federal education programs in order to expand school choice programs.

- NNSTOY opposes the federal government providing school choice through the creation of voucher programs, or other programs that direct federal funds to private schools.
- Any school choice option should require the same accountability measures as those required for traditional public schools.

IV. PUBLIC SCHOOLS SHOULD EDUCATE ALL STUDENTS REGARDLESS OF IMMIGRATION STATUS

- Students should be assured access to public education, regardless of the immigration documentation of the students or their parents.

V. TEACHER LEADERSHIP

NNSTOY ENDORSES AND URGES CO-SPONSORSHIP FOR:

Teachers and Parents at the Table Act (H.R.3246) -- Rep. Kathleen Rice (D-NY) and Rep. Elise Stefanik (R-NY)

With the strong conviction that policy is most effective when teachers are part of the policy process, NNSTOY members conceived this bill years ago. It has been introduced in multiple congresses and this year is expanded to include parents as well as teachers. It amends ESSA to create a voluntary teacher advisory committee, half of which must be state teachers of the year or finalists. The committee provides a perspective of expert teachers on the implementation of ESSA and issues two reports a year. The committee is also available for consultation with policy makers and is encouraged to survey their networks for broad input on policy matters of significance. A comparable parent advisory committee is established.

Teachers as Leaders Act – S. 1413 – Sen. Chris Coons (D-DE), Sen. Joni Ernst (R-IA), Sen. Chuck Grassley (R-IA) and Sen. Jack Reed (D-RI) sponsors

This bill authorizes the Teacher Quality Partnership Grant program in Title II of the Higher Education Act to create teacher leader development programs, thereby addressing ongoing challenges of teacher recruitment and retention and extending the continuum of teacher preparation and development into differentiated career paths. Grants would require partnerships between local school districts and higher education programs. Existing funds would be utilized to implement these newly authorized programs.

The Teacher Health and Wellness Act – H.R. 2544 – Rep. Tim Ryan (D-OH) sponsor; co-sponsors: Reps. Susan Davis (D-CA), Elise Stefanik (R-NY) and Darren Soto (D-FL)

This bill creates a pilot study at the National Institutes of Health aimed at reducing teacher stress and increasing teacher retention and well-being by implementing and analyzing results of a range of programs, including: workplace wellness programs; social emotional learning programs that help teachers improve student engagement; teacher stress management programs; mentoring and induction programs; organizational interventions such as teacher leadership regarding school management; teacher residency programs with mental health and psychological support; complimentary health strategies such as mindfulness meditation and school reorganization.

The Chronic Absenteeism and Reduction Act – H.R. 1864 – Rep. Tim Ryan (D-OH), sponsor

This bill acknowledges the significant impact of chronic student absenteeism on school success and well-being. It amends ESSA to authorize funds to be used for interventions for students who miss 10% or more of school days including data collection, partnering with community organizations, mentoring, school reorganization, extended parent engagement, home visits, evidence based restorative justice strategies and personnel training to build positive school climates and promote social-emotional learning.