



Internet Association



November 4, 2015

The Honorable Lamar Alexander
Chairman, Committee on Health,
Education, Labor and Pensions
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Patty Murray
Ranking Member, Committee on Health,
Education, Labor and Pensions
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable John Kline
Chairman, Committee on Education
and the Workforce
United States House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Robert C. Scott
Ranking Member, Committee on Education
and the Workforce
United States House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Chairmen Alexander and Kline, and Ranking Members Murray and Scott:

We, the undersigned associations, represent the world's leading and most innovative technology companies. We write to applaud your efforts to reauthorize the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) and encourage you to maintain the education technology and the science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) provisions within S. 1177, the Every Child Achieves Act of 2015, and H.R. 5, the Student Success Act, as you move to conference. This reauthorization effort is vitally important to strengthening the STEM skills of our nation's students; we therefore encourage you to reject attaching any controversial provisions that would impede its progress toward becoming public law.

S. 1177 would improve STEM and computer science education both inside and outside the classroom, and provide students who are members of underrepresented groups within STEM fields additional access to STEM programs. The legislation would promote technology literacy by encouraging educators to implement blended learning initiatives, as well as by focusing on professional development through the Innovative Technology Expands Children's Horizons (I-TECH) program. H.R. 5 would also advance blended learning programs by providing educational institutions with ability to develop new instructional models, purchase digital instructional material and information technology products, and allocate resources for professional development opportunities for educators and other school officials. In today's knowledge-based economy, the ability of our students to have direct access to STEM

education and education technology are critical steps in maintaining our country's competitiveness, now and in the future.

Our industry is acutely aware that what is being taught in many of our nation's schools does not fully align with the skill sets our increasingly digital economy requires. Far too many graduates enter the workforce without adequate exposure to STEM and sound technology literacy skills, threatening American innovation and job growth. Many of our most creative companies are unable to expand and further boost the U.S. economy because they lack access to bright human capital here at home. In fact, the United States is expected to face a shortfall of approximately 223,000 STEM workers by 2018. Moreover, recent studies found that 58 percent of America's youth possess limited ability to solve problems using technology, ranking the United States last on the Programme for International Assessment of Adult Competencies (PIAAC) technology test out of 19 participating countries.¹ If the United States is serious about creating jobs and spurring economic growth, we should look to our schools and ensure that American students are armed with the education and skills they will need to compete in an increasingly competitive global market.

Given the importance of fostering a robust STEM skillset in the rising generation of American workers and entrepreneurs, we urge you to avoid attaching any controversial measures to S. 1177 and H.R. 5 that would impede the ESEA reauthorization effort. Proposals such as the Student Privacy Protection Act, a proposal to update the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) of 1974, contain concepts that require further consideration and may therefore draw opposition to the underlying measure.

We look forward to working with you and the conference committee in the months ahead to ensure the final ESEA conference report fosters a stronger STEM academic environment by including the above STEM and education technology provisions from S. 1177 and H.R. 5.

Sincerely,

Application Developers Alliance
Information Technology Industry Council
Internet Association
NetChoice
Software & Information Industry Association
TechNet

¹ Change the Equation (2015) "Does Not Compute: The High Cost of Low Technology Skills in the U.S. and What We Can Do About It" (June 2015). Available at: http://changetheequation.org/sites/default/files/CTE_VitalSigns_TechBrief.pdf.