



**Virginia PTA Statement to the
Virginia Board of Education
Regarding ESEA Flexibility Through Waivers**
Wednesday, October 25, 2011

Members of the Board, Dr. Wright, I am Anne Carson, President-Elect of the Virginia PTA. As you know, Virginia PTA is the largest child-advocacy association in the state with over 300,000 members. A very large portion of our association's work is focused on the quality of our public schools and the assurance that all children regardless of their locality, socio-economic status, or race are afforded a high caliber education. Virginia PTA supported the development of state standards and accountability measures for Virginia and we, along with National PTA, support a nation-wide standard so that all children who move either to or from Virginia's public schools will be prepared to continue on the road to graduation without any need for remediation or to repeat coursework. We feel this is especially important given the number of military families that serve in Virginia at some point during their children's K-12 education and then, most likely, move onto another state.

While Virginia PTA is grateful for the good work this Board does to update and maintain our standards here in Virginia, our members certainly recognize the need to change some components of ESEA and National PTA is working closely with the US Senate as they develop a bill for reauthorization and monitoring the House as they also look at taking action on the reauthorization. We realize this may be slow work and we are grateful that Secretary Duncan recognizes the need for some flexibility in certain requirements of ESEA and we are very grateful that this Board recognizes the need to engage parents in the process in Virginia.

At this point we are prepared to offer some input into the three reform areas Virginia currently anticipates:

1. Adoption of college- and career-ready standards and assessments- Virginia PTA is concerned by some reports that to meet this requirement the Board of Education is considering changing the test results on some SOL assessment from "Pass Advanced" to "College and Career Ready." We have found that some families misunderstand the distinction between the current "Pass" and "Pass Advanced" by reading more into the word "Advanced" than is intended. We are concerned by the implications of identifying a student's test score as "College and Career Ready" when we know that simply passing a SOL test, even at a high level, may not make a student ready for either college or career. Think of our sophomores currently taking Algebra II. Are they "College and Career ready" at 15 or 16 years old simply because they passed their SOL test? Frankly we are more concerned about those who miss

passing at the advanced level as not being identified as “College and Career Ready” which this type of name change could imply. Our goal should not be to turn a student off of college simply because of one test. We would encourage this Board to carefully consider perception when identifying or renaming a test result.

2. Waiver of sanctions for Title I schools failing to meet adequate yearly progress (AYP) targets- Virginia PTA believes that consideration of the different needs of each school should be a factor in determining the interventions necessary to turn schools around. We are encouraged by that requirement in order to seek this waiver. Virginia PTA would like to see avenues for increased family engagement in any of our lower performing school’s turn around plans. Research consistently indicates that family involvement is an indicator to student, and therefore, school success.

3. Adoption of evaluation systems for teachers and principals that are based on growth, and holding local educational agencies (LEAs) accountable for implementing the systems with fidelity- Virginia PTA member’s position is that every student deserves a highly qualified teacher, but we are concerned about the use of SOL or other student assessment as either the lone or the majority indicator of teacher effectiveness. Multiple measures that evaluate classroom effectiveness and student growth must be used. Virginia PTA continues to be concerned about how student growth will be measured for those teachers who teach non-SOL curriculum. We are also concerned about how our highest and lowest performing students’ growth would be measured and how those measures may effect teacher evaluations who work with these populations.

As Virginia moves towards filing for ESEA waivers, PTA is ready and able to offer input, to help keep our families informed, and to be the parent resource for this Board. Thank you for inviting us to be a part of this conversation. We look forward to a continued dialogue.

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