

August 2010

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Informing Advocates for Children

Family Engagement in Education Act Update

Less than three months after its introduction in the U.S. House of Representatives, the bipartisan Family Engagement in Education Act, H.R. 5211, has been cosponsored by nearly 30 representatives from both sides of the aisle. The proposal, developed by National PTA and experts in the field, has not only gained strong Congressional support, but also helped generate momentum for including family engagement in core education reforms.

In a July 14 address to the NAACP, U.S. Secretary of Administration would require its turnaround models in its Elementary and Secondary known as the No Child Left refers specifically to parents' schools through the four school closure, restart, transformation model already engagement, and PTA and its year to include family [Read Secretary Duncan's](#)



National PTA president Chuck Saylor and U.S. Secretary of Education Arne Duncan at the 2010 National PTA Convention.

Department's May release of was aligned to several in the specifically doubling the Title I set-aside from 1 percent to 2 percent and including guidance based on PTA's research-based [National Standards for Family-School Partnerships](#). The new proposal also creates a \$145 million "Family Engagement and Responsibility Fund" in which states would set-aside 1 percent of their Title I allocation to fund innovative community-based family engagement programs.

At the 2010 [National PTA Annual Convention](#), several advocacy efforts were organized to gained support for H.R. 5211, The Family Engagement in Education Act. PTA members were able to take action in the National PTA Call-in Day by calling their Representatives to urge them to become cosponsors of H.R. 5211. Also, PTA members participated in a postcard campaign in support of H.R. 5211. All postcards were hand delivered, by National PTA staff, to each Representative's office.

[View an overview and full bill text of H.R. 5211.](#)

Let's keep the momentum for family engagement in education going!

[Send an action alert asking your member of Congress to cosponsor H.R. 5211.](#)

Education Arne Duncan announced that the parent and community engagement in all of proposal for the reauthorization of the Education Act (ESEA), the federal law also Behind Act. The secretary's announcement engagement in turning around struggling models proposed by the Administration: turnaround, and transformation. The requires family and community partners have advocated during the last engagement in the other models as well. [speech.](#)

This announcement follows the a new [family engagement proposal](#) that Family Engagement in Education Act,

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During National PTA's relocation to Alexandria, VA, online versions of our e-newsletters are currently unavailable. PTA.org is available, but updated information is limited. We appreciate your patience during this exciting growth period, and apologize for any inconvenience. Online versions will be posted as soon as possible.

House Education and Labor Committee Approves Child Nutrition Bill

Time Running Out for Both Chambers of Congress to Act

On Thursday, July 15, the House Committee on Education and Labor passed H.R. 5504, the Improving Nutrition for America's Children Act, a bill to reauthorize school meals and other child nutrition programs. This reauthorization includes an approximately \$8 billion increase in funding over the next 10 years. This legislation was overwhelmingly supported by the committee, passing in a bipartisan manner by a vote of 32-13.

The Improving Nutrition for America's Children Act was introduced in June by Rep. George Miller (D-CA), Chair of the House Education and Labor Committee. The \$8 billion increase provided under this legislation is a substantial investment in critical programs that address child health, hunger and obesity. This bipartisan legislation responsibly focuses limited resources to address the urgent needs of young Americans in a time when nearly one quarter of children are at risk of hunger and one third are either overweight or obese. H.R. 5504 includes common sense measures to help ensure that both of these trends can be reversed, including supports for the direct certification process, and updated nutrition standards for all foods served in schools.

National PTA's recommendations for Child Nutrition Act reauthorization can be found on page 17 of our [2010 Public Policy Agenda](#).

Meanwhile, In the Senate

Back in March, the Senate Agriculture Committee unanimously passed their version of the bill, S. 3307, the Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act. But it has yet to be voted upon by the full Senate. With these programs expiring on September 30, it is critical that both bodies act in order to avoid an extension of current policy—which has contributed to high levels of child hunger and obesity.

On July 29, [National PTA President Charles J. "Chuck" Saylor](#)s spoke at a recent press event in support of Senate action. The event, organized by Senate Agriculture Committee Chair Blanche Lincoln (the sponsor of S. 3307), featured appeals for congressional action by senators and advocates for child health.

For more information on the many provisions and improvements included in this bill, please visit the [Senate Agriculture Committee's website](#).



National PTA President Charles J. "Chuck" Saylor listens as Senate Agriculture Committee Chairman Blanche Lincoln speaks at a press conference on July 29. Saylor spoke alongside a bipartisan group of senators and advocates, urging the Senate to swiftly take up and pass the Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act.

Congress Fails to Pass Measure to Save Education Jobs

In late July, Congress passed a \$58 billion war supplemental bill that was originally slated to include \$10 billion in funding to save approximately 138,000 educator jobs. But in the final days of negotiation, funding was stripped from the bill.

Passing the House by a final vote of 308-114, the supplemental measure includes funding for the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, but also contains emergency funding for other domestic programs.

Previous versions of the war supplemental included funding offsets that would have cut over \$800 million from important education reform programs such as Race to the Top and the Teacher Incentive Fund. In response, the White House promised to veto any version of the bill should it include cuts to these education reform programs. Advocates remained fragmented in the final days of negotiations on how to offset the funding for the \$10 billion to save education jobs.

National PTA is disappointed that Congress was unable to pass a measure that included funding to avoid teacher layoffs. But we remain hopeful that Congress will identify another legislative vehicle before adjourning in preparation for the upcoming November elections. For updates on education job funding, please join the PTA Takes Action Network at PTA.org/TakesAction/.

President Obama Announces Fatherhood Initiative

On June 21, during a Father's Day event in Washington, DC, President Barack Obama announced The Fatherhood, Marriage and Family Innovation Fund, which will "scale up effective fatherhood and family-strengthening programs." The fund is part of a nationwide fatherhood initiative designed to raise awareness about the importance of fatherhood, and help absent fathers reengage with their families.

Obama has also authorized U.S. Department of Labor funding for transitional jobs programs for "noncustodial parents facing barriers to employment." The U.S. Department of Justice will also create its first "Fathering Reentry Court" to connect ex-offender fathers with employment opportunities and services they need to honor their child support responsibilities.

The President specifically mentioned the National PTA as an organization that can assist in this important effort. National PTA leaders, including President Charles J. "Chuck" Saylor, CEO [Byron V. Garrett](#), Ambassador and NFL athlete [Chris Draft](#), and with five PTA fathers from the local Washington, D.C. area, attended the event.

National PTA Moderates Webinar on Family Engagement

On June 30, National PTA moderated the second webinar in the U.S. Department of Education's webinar series, *Achieving Excellence and Innovation in Family, School and Community Engagement*. This webinar, *A New Day: Family, School, and Community Engagement in Education Reform*, showed how Title I dollars can be used to

engage parents in meaningful ways that raise student achievement. National PTA Director of Government Affairs Mishaela Durán moderated the webinar; participants included speakers from the U.S. Department of Education, the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE), the Maryland Parental Information and Resource Center (Maryland PIRC), and Boston Public Schools (BPS).

The webinar provided detailed examples of what effective family engagement looks like at the state and district level. The MSDE, for example, has a dedicated staff for family engagement, and helps identify Title I schools and districts that need assistance in partnering with families. It works closely with Maryland PIRC to provide capacity building, technical assistance and training to districts and schools need to improve their parent involvement activities. MSDE and Maryland PIRC also partner with the Maryland PTA on initiatives to ensure parent leaders are engaged in decision-making about family engagement in their schools.

Michele Brooks, BPS Assistant Superintendent for Family and Student Engagement, discussed how the district empowers parents to support student learning and advocate for broader education reform; and trains schools on how to meaningfully engage parents and create a welcoming environment for families. BPS informs their work by using PTA's National Standards for Family-School Partnerships.

If you'd like to learn more about these examples, view the [archived webinar and PowerPoint slides](#).

The next webinar in the series, *Data Driven: Making Student and School Data Accessible and Meaningful to Families*, will be on **Tuesday, August 10 at 3:30 p.m. EDT**. It will focus on how schools and district can engage parents using student data to support learning at home and drive educational decision-making. Among the presenters is New Visions for Public Schools in New York City, a nonprofit organization that has helped the district turn around many struggling schools.

Don't miss this important opportunity to learn firsthand about ways to engage family and community in supporting student learning.

[Please register for the webinar.](#)

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