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September 7, 2011

Honorable Tom Harkin
Chairman
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Labor and Pensions
U.S. Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Honorable Mike Enzi
Ranking Member
Committee on Health, Education
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U.S. Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Harkin and Ranking Member Enzi:

On behalf of the Board of Directors for the National Association for Bilingual Education (NABE) and the 22 state affiliates representing over 6 million bilingual students and over 3,000 bilingual education teachers, professors, researchers, administrators, parents, advocates, and policy makers, we thank you for the opportunity to provide comments on the Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor and Pensions (HELP) discussion draft for reauthorization of the Workforce Investment Act of 1998 (WIA).

The National Association for Bilingual Education (NABE) is a national organization based in Silver Springs, MD committed to strong advocacy for excellence in bilingual and biliteracy education for bilingual and other students through enriched educational programs. In addition to advocacy, our mission is to cultivate a multilingual society by promoting policy, pedagogy, and research for excellence in education that respects cultural and linguistic diversity and provides equitable educational opportunities for all students.

NABE is pleased to offer support for the Senate HELP Committee discussion draft with some suggestions and caveats.

In particular, NABE strongly supports the following elements in the ESEA reauthorization draft:

- Inclusion of bilingual education services as core purpose of Title III and greater support for ESL and English Language Learners;
- Greater alignment between workforce development and adult education, including matching language between Titles I, II, and III;
- Required state professional development programs on effective education for bilingual students;
- Additional support for research, including the reinstatement of the National Institute for Adult Education and Literacy.
- Support for postsecondary education attainment as well as career pathway programs;

The National Association for Bilingual Education (NABE) offers the following recommendations and priorities for the WIA reauthorization for your consideration that will provide the needed federal support and guidance to achieve greater equity in our schools:

1. Reauthorize ESEA and reinstate the longstanding Bilingual Education Act, the Office of Bilingual Education and Minority Languages Affairs (OBEMLA) and the National Clearinghouse for Bilingual Education (NCBE).
2. Change the existing label: Limited English Proficient (LEP) and English Language Learner (ELL) to a more accurate and respectful label: **“Bilingual Learners”** which reflects learning in both languages that will yield bilingualism, biliteracy, and higher academic achievement.
3. Establish policy and target funding for the following types of bilingual education programs which research indicates are some of the ones that most effectively close the achievement gap and produce long term achievement:
 - One-Way Dual Language Enrichment (for both bilingual and native English speakers)
 - Two-Way Dual Language Enrichment (for both bilingual and native English speakers)
 - Late-Exit Transitional Bilingual Education (for bilingual students)

In these types of programs students learn in two languages the content of mathematics, science, social studies, and the language arts throughout their elementary years and beyond in some cases.

4. **When bilingual education is not available**, establish policy and target funding for:
 - Content-based ESL Education programs that include intercultural pragmatics so that emergent bilinguals can cope successfully with peers and teachers.
 - First language support in ESL programs and mainstream classes at the early stages to support students academically and emotionally.
5. **Increase and target funding for quality enrichment bilingual education** through educator preparation programs and other in-service programs to include:
 - Professional development on enrichment bilingual education and second language acquisition.
 - Establish Bilingual Education fellowships in higher education to increase highly qualified leaders at the masters and doctoral levels.
 - Research to continue to yield evidence in the efficacy of quality bilingual programs.
 - Acquisition of culturally relevant, content-rich instructional materials with high academic rigor.

6. **Increase and target funding for preparation of bilingually certified teachers** and content-area teachers with additional skills to effectively work with language minority students through the following:
 - Teacher preparation programs to “initially” prepare K-12 ESL, bilingual, and content-area teachers (mainstream-non-bilingual teachers) with second language acquisition pedagogy (ESL, sheltered instruction)
 - Professional development of “in-service” K-12 content-area teachers (mainstream-non-bilingual teachers) with second language acquisition pedagogy (ESL, sheltered instruction).
7. **Assessments:** Reduce the over-testing of students which drains scarce resources and interferes with effective instruction. Further, when assessments are absolutely necessary, promote the development and administration of academic assessments bilingual students. Use native language assessments for emergent bilingual students and later use assessment in the second language to the degree that is supported by their development. In the first few years assessment should be minimal. Acquiring another academic language is a lengthy process of four to seven years.
8. **Accountability Process:** promote an accountability process that is fair, non-punitive, and responsive to the educational needs of bilingual students, schools, and districts.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide comments on this discussion draft. NABE looks forward to working with you on this important legislation. If you would like additional information or have questions, please feel free to contact me at, rossana.boyd@unt.edu or Tel. 940-391-4800.

Sincerely,

RBoyd

Dr. Rossana Ramirez Boyd
President

cc: Dr. Santiago Wood, Executive Director
NABE Board of Directors