

National Black Church Initiative

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National Black Church Initiative Says *Every Student Succeeds Act* Fails Black Children *NBCI Calls for Higher Standards*

Washington, DC – The National Black Church Initiative (NBCI), a faith-based coalition of 34,000 churches comprised of 15 denominations and 15.7 million African Americans, oppose the recently signed law, *Every Student Succeeds Act*, is embodied with good principles given the most vulnerable population in public education, poor and minority students. Standardized testing allows for the progress of students to be tracked and show areas of growth and/or decline. Decisions about school policies and practices involving curriculum rigor, teacher quality, and related teaching and learning areas can be determined because of the competitiveness or lack thereof of test scores. With that principle alone, the black church supports President Obama and the bipartisanship efforts taken to maintain this important tracking system of student progress.

However, for as much as the *Every Student Succeeds Act* reaffirms the legitimacy of standardized testing in closing the achievement gap, the capacity to protect and prepare poor and minority students from noncompetitive standards and outcomes unfairly remains at the subjective will of the states and school boards where they reside. The ability to establish shared, highly competitive standards for the most vulnerable in public education gets compromised for the sake of decreased accountability and increased autonomy of the most powerful and influential.

Every Student Succeeds Act, unlike this legislation's progenitor, *No Child Left Behind*, eliminates access to federal enforcement tools that would hold states accountable for their actions in preparing students in general and minority students in particular. The absence of standardized accountability denies poor and minority students from access to quality education and standards that would allow them to be college and career ready as well as be competitive on a global level. Thus, the black church is extremely disappointed in the majority of the law that does not protect poor and minority although the law offers provisions for the federal government to intervene for the students in the bottom five percent. What about the remaining 95%? What mechanisms or assurances of protection do they have? Simply put, rich school systems where there are tremendous resources will continue to do well as opposed to poor school systems who will continue to perform at the level of their investment.

The black church agrees with the former Education Secretary Margaret Spellings in her statements, “She worried that in removing the consequences for failing to meet a federal educational standard, the law would take the pressure off states and districts to perform, especially for poor and minority students” (*New York Times*, December 10, 2015). There are no incentives or mandates for states to attain equality and provide equity for public school students. School district and/or state accountability are removed from any responsibility or liability according to federal legislations. Additionally, after a two-year analysis, much of the primary reason for which the black church insists on higher standards for this vulnerable student population is because laws like *Every Student Succeed Act* undermine the capacity at which these students are able to compete on a global level. Thus, there are three major take-a-ways in light of this new law, *Every Student Succeeds Act*, which will have long-term implications in the future for poor and minority students:

- The quality and rigor of educational standards are determined by states and local school boards who are not mandated to consider the global market for generating competitive students.
- Shared accountability between federal, state, and local governments is not valued within the quest to protect and prepare the most vulnerable population--poor and minority students.

While many people might not believe in this vulnerable population of poor and minority students, the black church believes in them and their perhaps untapped and raw capacity to be change agents. The black church believes in the importance of generating competitiveness that extends beyond local communities and the local states where these students reside. The black church believes these students should be prepared for a world that is uniquely different from what they see and/or experience on a day-to-day basis. That is the capacity of education and subsequent laws that we believe in. Through laws involving public school education, *Every Student Succeed Act* falls short in the most important ways to protect and alter the destiny for the most vulnerable population--poor and minority students.

About NBCI

The National Black Church Initiative (NBCI) is a coalition of 34,000 African American and Latino churches working to eradicate racial disparities in healthcare, technology, education, housing, and the environment. NBCI’s mission is to provide critical wellness information to all of its members, congregants, churches and the public. Our methodology is utilizing faith and sound health science.

NBCI’s purpose is to partner with major organizations and officials whose main mission is to reduce racial disparities in the variety of areas cited above. NBCI offers faith-based, out-of-the-box and cutting edge solutions to stubborn economic and social issues. NBCI’s programs are governed by credible statistical analysis, science based strategies and techniques, and methods that work. Visit our website at www.naltblackchurch.com