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NACSA Recognizes U.S. House of Representatives for Strong Charter School Provisions included in the ESEA Reauthorization Act

Today, the United States House of Representatives passed H.R. 5, a reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA). In response, Greg Richmond, president and CEO of the National Association of Charter School Authorizers (NACSA) issued the following statement:

“By passing a version of the ESEA reauthorization bill that maintains annual testing and strengthens the Public Charter School Program, the U.S. House of Representatives has demonstrated its commitment to working towards an education system that can give all children the opportunity to attend a great school.

The bill rightly maintains annual testing, which generates the performance data necessary to hold charter schools accountable for how well they educate children. These tests, and the data they generate, allow us to make well-informed decisions about how all public schools are working for our children, especially poor and minority students.

Charter schools have proved that performance data, generated by annual testing, is key to creating dramatic change in our educational system. In the past two years, charter school authorizers have used performance data as they decided to close 416 charter schools that had persistently failed. Data on performance is also used to identify the best charter schools that can be replicated, and encouraged to grow to serve more students.

The bill also includes a much needed reauthorization of the Public Charter Schools Program (CSP) focused on quality. The last time ESEA was passed in 2002, charter schools served more than 500,000 students in the country—today they serve more than 2.9 million students—and at that time, the importance of authorizing in building and maintaining quality charter schools was less known.

The CSP language includes bipartisan provisions that reflect lessons about charter school authorizing and school quality. It increases resources, raises standards, and strengthens accountability for quality charter school authorizing. In order to receive CSP funds, states for the first time will have to present a plan and fund initiatives to enhance charter school accountability. The House bill goes further than the current Senate bill by strongly prioritizing funding for the State grant program.

NACSA recognizes the leadership of House Speaker John Boehner (R-Ohio), House Education and the Workforce Committee Chairman John Kline (R-Minn.), Congressman Bobby Scott (D-Va.), Congressman Jared Polis (D-Colo.), and the many others who helped ensure these bipartisan measures were included over many years of discussion and debate.

Our nation has a responsibility to open and expand the best possible schools for children and then ensure we live up to those promises. We urge the Senate to pass its version of the ESEA bill. We look forward to working with both the Senate and the House to ensure that these and other important provisions are included in the final bill that comes out of conference.”

The National Association of Charter School Authorizers (NACSA) is committed to advancing excellence and accountability in the charter school sector and to increasing the number of high-quality charter schools across the nation. To accomplish this, NACSA works to improve the policies and practices of authorizers—the organizations designated to approve, monitor, renew, and, if necessary, close charter schools. NACSA provides training, consulting, and policy guidance to authorizers. It also advocates for laws and policies that raise the bar for excellence among authorizers and the schools they charter. In late 2012, NACSA launched its One Million Lives campaign to give one million more children the opportunity to attend a great school. Visit www.qualitycharters.org

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