

A-PLUS Act

The Academic Partnerships Lead Us to Success Act

A declaration of intent to allow for States to assume autonomy and accountability to parents and the general public.

Sponsored by Representative Pete Hoekstra

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SECTION I: SHORT TITLE; TABLE OF CONTENTS; PURPOSE; DEFINITIONS

Purpose:

- (1) To provide States and local communities with maximum freedom and flexibility to determine how to improve academic achievement and implement education reforms.
- (2) To reduce the administrative costs and compliance burdens of federal education programs to focus federal resources on improving academic achievement.
- (3) To ensure that States and communities are held accountable to the public for advancing the academic achievement of all students, especially disadvantaged children.

Definitions:

- (1) Declaration of intent means a decision by a State made through State Authorizing Officials or by voter referendum to assume full management responsibility for the expenditure of federal funds for certain eligible programs to advance a more comprehensive and effective basis the educational policy of such State.
- (2) States include all 50 States, the District of Columbia and U.S. provinces.
- (3) State Authorizing Officials are State officials who shall authorize the submission of a declaration of intent, or any amendments, on behalf of the State. The officials shall include not less than two of the following:
 - the governor of the State
 - the highest elected education official of the State
 - the legislature of the State
- (4) State Designate Officer will submit the declaration of intent and any amendments on behalf of the State and serve as the point-of-contact for the State to the Secretary.
- (5) Accountability means that public schools are accountable to parents and other taxpayers for the use of public funds and shall report student progress to them regularly.

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SECTION II: DECLARATION OF INTENT

Provides the State with the authority to submit a declaration of intent to the Secretary of Education stating that it will consolidate and use funds to advance the educational priorities of the State.

A State may include any programs for which Congress appropriates money to the State for the purpose described in section 1001 of Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965. A State may not include any program funded under the Individual with Disabilities Education Act.

Contents of Declaration: A State's declaration of intent shall include the following components:

- (1) Exempts the State from all federal requirements for the use of federal education funding streams identified in the declaration;
- (2) An assurance that the declaration has been authorized by voter referendum or by State Authorizing Officials;
- (3) The duration of the declaration of intent shall not exceed five years;
- (4) An assurance that the State will use fiscal control and transparent accounting procedures;
- (5) An assurance that the State will meet the requirements of federal civil rights laws in fulfilling the declaration of intent;
- (6) An assurance that the State will advance the educational opportunities for the disadvantaged; and
- (7) A description of the State's plan to maintain direct accountability to parents and residents of the State.

Approval of the Declaration of Intent: Requires the Secretary to recognize the State's declaration of intent within 60 days of submission, unless it fails to meet the requirements specified by the contents specified under the act. If the Secretary fails to act within 60 days, the declaration of intent is automatically approved.

Amendments to the Declaration of Intent: Allows the State to amend its declaration of intent by removing or expanding the scope of the programs included. The State must include an effective date and provide adequate time to ensure full compliance with federal program requirements should the State choose to withdraw programs from the declaration. Requires the Secretary to recognize the amendment within 60 days of submission.

SECTION III: TRANSPARENCY FOR RESULTS OF PUBLIC EDUCATION

Annual Reporting: Requires the State to report annually to parents and the general public with information about the State's student achievement assessment system, demonstrating student progress. The report shall include a description on how the State has used federal funds to improve academic achievement and improve educational opportunities for the disadvantaged.

A State will determine the achievement assessment system it will employ to demonstrate student progress with respect to the State's definition of proficiency.

A State will determine the accountability system it will use to report student achievement to parents and the general public.

SECTION IV: MAINTENANCE OF FUNDING LEVELS SPENT BY STATES ON EDUCATION

Requires the State to spend at least 90 percent of the amount it spent on education before the enactment of this bill.

Allows the requirement to be waived if the State demonstrates that exceptional or uncontrollable circumstances (i.e., natural disaster) prevent the State from complying with the provision.

SECTION V: ADMINISTRATIVE EXPENSES

Allows a State to spend not more than 1 percent of its funds for administrative expenses when Title I funds are included within the scope of the declaration of intent.

Allows a State to spend not more than 3 percent of its funds for administrative expenses when Title I funds are not included within the scope of the declaration of intent.

SECTION VI: EQUITABLE PARTICIPATION OF PRIVATE SCHOOLS

Allows for private schools to continue participating in the same manner that they participate under current law.