

July 29, 2014

Members of the Utah State Board of Education

Dear Members of the Board:

We, the undersigned, representing the business community and local school boards, respectfully request that the Utah State Board of Education seek a continuation of the ESEA I Flexibility Waiver currently in effect. We believe there are significant reasons to support our recommendation as listed below:

- The State Board of Education and the Utah education community requested and were subsequently granted an ESEA I Flexibility Waiver under the provisions of No Child Left Behind (NCLB) to give Utah greater control over its education programs and methods for assessing successful practices. A rejection of the Waiver places Utah back under the provisions of NCLB, thus increasing federal involvement rather than diminishing it. Moreover, the idea of shifting the policy platforms of the state back and forth is unnecessarily disruptive to those who must administer the educational programs of the state.
- All 41 school superintendents in Utah favor continuing the Flexibility Waiver.
- According to correspondence with the Utah School Boards Association, all local school boards favor continuation of the Waiver.
- Rejection of the Waiver would cost the state at least \$26.5 million and perhaps more when the full implications of moving back to the NCLB provisions are fully realized.
- The loss of \$26.5 million would most likely affect the Title I schools in the state, thus putting some of our most vulnerable students at greater risk of not completing school successfully.
- There is no clear plan for replacing the possible loss of \$26.5 million. A special session of the Utah Legislature seems very unlikely and a request for replacement funds for a future fiscal year will have to compete with all of the other important demands facing the state. With no clear plan in the works, the loss of funds seems to be an ill-prepared and ill-timed initiative.
- Business leaders in the state have a vital interest in the success of our K-12 schools. As a key stakeholder in the development of new education policies, our perspectives and judgment should be considered. Surely the support of the business community is an important part of any successful plan for improving education in the state.

We acknowledge that federal policy making has made educational programs difficult to manage, but the Waiver seems to ease the burden. We realize that since there has been no discussion with the business community that we represent, we may not fully understand the motives and rationale for the proposed rejection of the Waiver. Until we do understand the motives and rationale of this policy change and can be convinced that it fits into the long-term success of our education system, we cannot support the initiative to reject the ESEA I Flexibility Waiver.

Sincerely,

<letter will be signed by 30-50 business leaders and chairs of local school boards>