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Statement by Commission on FEA Report on Assessment and Accountability in NCLB

Washington, DC—Today the Commission on No Child Left Behind made the following statement in response to the Forum on Educational Accountability's (FEA) report on assessment and accountability in the No Child Left Behind Act.

“The No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) was created to ensure that all children become proficient in core subjects based on academic standards set by states. Valid and reliable assessments, taken by all students across the state, represent concrete measurements of how well students are progressing toward the expectations contained in those standards.

The FEA report recommendation to incorporate a combination of multiple measures such as teacher observations; classroom assessments, essays; laboratory work; presentations and portfolios in local and district assessments to determine accountability would significantly weaken NCLB. The Commission does agree that classroom tools, such as formative assessments, are very important in providing teachers, administrators and parents with useful information to help them better address student needs throughout the year. However, they are not sufficient for accountability determinations. Without a consistent, objective measure to determine what students have learned, there is no way to know if schools are succeeding in improving student performance or if they need additional help. Critically, without these summative assessments of progress, there is also no way to assure that all students and schools are being held to the same high expectations.

The Commission recommends improving the quality of state assessments for all, particularly English language learners and students with disabilities. We recommend, continuing NCLB's current federal appropriation of nearly \$400 million annually to states for that purpose. We also recommend giving flexibility to states by allowing the use of growth models in determining adequate yearly progress (AYP). This will allow schools that make significant progress in improving student achievement to receive appropriate credit and will yield more useful data to inform instruction and school improvement priorities. However, growth models should not be used to give credit for any forward movement or for progress that does not lead to proficiency. The Commission believes that students should be counted as achieving AYP only if they are on track to reaching proficiency in no more than three years.

We have a responsibility as a nation to take bold steps to accelerate progress in closing achievement gaps that still

plague our schools and to ensure that all children are prepared for successful and productive lives after high school. While significant improvements must be made to NCLB to achieve that goal, we cannot afford to back away from our insistence on holding the same high expectations for all children paired with meaningful accountability for results based on objective measures of progress.”

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