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## NCLB Commission Statement on U.S. House Hearing on English Language Learners

Washington, DC—Today the Commission on No Child Left Behind made the following statement in response to the U.S. House of Representatives Committee on Education and Labor, Subcommittee on Early Childhood, Elementary and Secondary Education hearing on the Impact of NCLB on English language learners.

The Commission commends the Committee for holding a hearing focused on improving the law's impact on English language learners. The number of English language learners entering U.S. schools is growing rapidly each year. Since 1994, the number of English language learners in U.S. schools has grown from 2 million to more than 5 million students. These students speak many languages and come from many different cultures. We, as a nation, must do all we can to ensure that these children learn English and succeed academically.

“English language learners must not be left out of the bounds of accountability nor should they be subjected to assessments that are inappropriate measures of what they can do,” said Commissioner, Dr. Eugene García. To that end, we must ensure that teachers get the training and support they need to teach English language learners well. We must assure parents that we are setting high standards for their students and measuring them fairly on those standards. We must ensure that no English language learner is “invisible” in our accountability systems.

Our report, *Beyond NCLB: Fulfilling the Promise to Our Nation's Children*, lays out specific, actionable steps that can be taken by Congress to make sure that states set high standards, require fair and accurate assessment systems and train teachers well to help all English language learners succeed. Our recommendations ensure that English language learners are appropriately included in the accountability systems that are applied to all students, and we recommend specific solutions to address the unique challenges facing schools in educating English language learners.

As it does for all students, the Commission recommends limiting the minimum size for including subgroups of children for accountability purposes to 20 in order to ensure that more students are included in measuring school performance without jeopardizing the privacy of individual students. We recommend allowing the use of growth models to ensure that schools receive credit for significant improvements in student performance and to track individual student progress. We recommend including a measure of *effectiveness* in the classroom in improving student achievement for making determinations about teacher quality and school leadership. And, any teacher who spends more than a quarter of the school day teaching English language learners would be required to obtain a state-sponsored endorsement for instruction of English language learners. This requirement for more targeted professional development for teachers is a major step toward ensuring that all students are taught by highly effective teachers. The Commission also recommends requiring schools to report graduation data by subgroups to ensure that they are not masking problems by reporting only averages across subgroups.

In addition, we make specific recommendations that help ensure that the unique needs of English language learners are met. We recommend that the U.S. DOE withhold a portion of the administrative funds from states that have not fully developed and implemented English language proficiency standards and assessments within one year of a reauthorized NCLB. We recommend allowing states to develop and implement alternative assessments in academic subjects and for assessing English language proficiency for those students that have been in the U.S. for less than three years. And, we ask the U.S. Department of Education to develop a common scale across states for measuring English proficiency to ensure that all English language learners are held to high standards. “To understand the challenge of educating English language learners requires a precise national definition of who they are as opposed to state determined definitions that vary in scope and depth,” said Dr. García.

We urge the adoption of this comprehensive set of recommendations to ensure that English language learners and all other students will succeed. These and other recommendations by the Commission form a blueprint for improving NCLB and accelerating the progress in meeting its goal of proficiency for all students. You can access the Commission’s full report by visiting [www.nclbcommission.org](http://www.nclbcommission.org).

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