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Agudath
Israel
of America
אגודת ישראל באמריקה

June 18, 2013

Rabbi Abba Cohen
Vice President for Federal Government Affairs
Washington Director and Counsel

The Honorable John R. Kline, Chairman
House Education and the Workforce Committee
Washington, D.C.

Re: Participation of Private School Children in ESEA Programs

Dear Mr. Chairman:

I write on behalf of Agudath Israel of America to express our strong support for provisions in H.R. 5, the Student Success Act, that relate to participation of private school students in federal education programs. The House Education and Workforce Committee is expected to mark up the measure this week.

Agudath Israel is a national Orthodox Jewish organization, with members and chapters in many parts of the country. One of our responsibilities in Washington is to advocate on behalf of the hundreds of elementary and secondary schools that come under the umbrella of the National Society for Hebrew Day Schools. For half a century, we have been actively engaged in education-related legislation and public policy.

Indeed, in 1964, when the original Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) was being considered, Agudath Israel, among others, strongly advocated for the "equitable participation" of private school children in federal aid programs. And, in enshrining the concept into law, Congress made a strong statement that ***all*** children should be afforded the educational assistance and opportunity our government has to offer, ***regardless of the type of school they attend.***

Unfortunately, for various reasons, "equitable participation" has not lived up to its promise. All-too-often private school children are not receiving the full measure of educational assistance that they are entitled to and that Congress envisioned. We are pleased that, in H.R. 5, the private school provisions set forth in ESEA have been greatly strengthened and will, we believe, go far in bringing greater equity and opportunity to ***all*** of America's schoolchildren.

We greatly appreciate your efforts and congratulate you on this important achievement.

Sincerely yours,


Rabbi Abba Cohen