



## **FAMILY ENGAGEMENT IN EDUCATION ACT Proposal Overview**

Research demonstrates that family engagement in a child's education increases student achievement, improves attendance, and reduces the dropout rate. The Family Engagement in Education Act incentivizes schools and districts to meaningfully engage families to close the achievement gap.

**1. Incentivizes Districts and Schools to use Best Practices for Family Engagement** –The Family Engagement in Education Act shifts from paper compliance to incentivizing schools and districts to use research-based practices to meaningfully engage families and improve student achievement. Specifically, the Family Engagement in Education Act would:

- Codify PTA's research-based National Standards for Family-School Partnerships and provide guidance on allowable uses of the 1 percent set-aside for family engagement to promote best practices and innovation.
- Incentivize school districts to meaningfully engage families by increasing the set-aside for family engagement from 1 percent to 2 percent and providing additional training and technical assistance on best practices.
- Engage parent leaders in developing and assessing the implementation of family engagement policies and practices.
- Add shared expectations and responsibilities for student behavior, attendance, school climate and safety, and the provision of classroom-based positive behavior interventions in school-parent compacts.

**2. Builds Statewide Capacity for Effective Family Engagement in Education** – Current law not does provide the resources and capacity for states to implement family engagement in education policies and practices that are scalable, effective, and outcomes-driven. The Family Engagement in Education Act builds statewide capacity for effective partnerships between families and schools and engages parents and community members in developing and coordinating family engagement in education strategies that extend across a child's lifespan and in all learning settings. The Family Engagement in Education Act would:

- Authorize activities and resources for SEAs to develop, implement, and assess LEA family engagement in education policies and initiatives to ensure the federal investment is spent on research-based practices and innovation in the field.
- Establish state-level Family Engagement Coordinating Councils, comprised of family members and other stakeholders, to coordinate and integrate systemic family engagement initiatives that support children from cradle to career.

**3. Restructure Parental Information Resource Centers (PIRCs) to Provide High-Quality Services and Reach More Families**– Under current law, PIRCs are required to perform a number of functions, ranging from providing information on school choice to providing direct services to parents. PIRCs’ many and variegated program functions result in federal resources not being appropriately allocated to achieve the desired impact - a strategy that sets policy and implements, evaluates, and takes to scale innovation and best practices that engage families in children’s education. The Family Engagement in Education Act would:

- Tighten PIRC responsibilities to align with the quality framework developed by the U.S. Department of Education, Harvard Family Research Project, and Southwest Educational Development Laboratory.
- Shift scope from providing information and limited services to parents to providing capacity-building, training, and technical assistance to SEAs and LEAs, in order to scale up innovative practices and reach more families, particular those in high-need communities.
- Establish a minimum grant award of \$500,000 to assure baseline family engagement in education capacity in each State and rename PIRCs “Statewide Family Engagement Centers” (SFECs) to better reflect their new role.

**4. Pilots a Local Family Engagement Center Demonstration Program** –During the last reauthorization of ESEA, Congress determined a critical need for direct services for families, which would be provided by community-based organizations. In response, Congress added a funding trigger that would establish Local Family Information Centers if PIRCs’ funding reached \$50 million. Unfortunately, this threshold was never met and local services have not been implemented to remove barriers to family engagement in education. The Family Engagement in Education Act would:

- Authorize a pilot demonstration program for local family engagement centers, including a robust evaluation system to support replication.
- Shift scope from providing information to families to providing direct services tailored to families’ needs that remove barriers for family engagement in education.

**5. Improves Professional Development in Family Engagement in Education** – A key factor in the retention of high quality teachers is parents’ engagement in their children’s learning. To support this essential component of recruiting and retaining excellent teachers and leaders, the Family Engagement in Education Act would:

- Authorize States to use their teacher and principal training and recruiting fund for professional development in the area of family engagement in education.
- Require States to describe how they will use their Title II funds to improve teacher and principal knowledge and skills in engaging families.

**6. Extends Family Engagement in Education to Neglected and Delinquent Youth** – The educational outcomes of children involved in the foster care and juvenile justice systems are extremely poor, due to multiple educational placements and lack of discharge planning. In order to ensure continuity of educational services and placements among children in vulnerable situations, the Family Engagement in Education Act would:

- Require each SEA and LEA receiving funds under the Neglected and Delinquent Youth program to include a strategy for family engagement in education within their application and state plan.
- Require each correctional facility to prepare an educational services and transition plan for each child or youth served and to establish family engagement policies that are consistent with Section 1118 of Title I.

**7. Builds National-Level Capacity for Family Engagement** –There is a need for a national investment in research, policy, and interagency coordination focused on family engagement in education across a child’s lifespan and in all learning settings. The Act would:

- Require the Secretary to convene a body of family engagement researchers and expert practitioners to develop metrics to assess the impact of family engagement policies and practices on student achievement in order to provide additional guidance to districts and schools.
- Establish within the Office of Elementary and Secondary Education, dedicated staff for family, school, and community engagement. The duties of the staff include articulation of a national vision of family engagement in education, interagency and intra-agency coordination, establishment of a family engagement research agenda, and grants administration.
- Require the Government Accountability Office to conduct a study on the use of funds for family engagement, the barriers to implementing family engagement provisions, and the innovative and effective policies and practices supported by Section 1118 of Title I.
- Establish a National Indian Family Engagement Coordinating Council to ensure tribal communities and schools have a forum to develop innovative strategies to engage American Indian families.

**8. Authorizes a Consolidated Appropriation for Family Engagement in Education**

**Purposes-** The Family Engagement in Education Act authorizes an appropriation of \$195 million annually, with a reservation of funds therein for: Local Family Engagement Centers Demonstration Program, Statewide Family Engagement Centers, State Family Engagement Coordinating Councils, State Support for Family Engagement, Family Engagement Activities at Tribally Controlled Schools, and Dedicated Staff for Family, School, and Community Engagement.