

Rep. Honda and Sen. Reed Introduce Bill to Improve Educator Preparation

Written by Michael Shank
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WASHINGTON, DC – U.S. Representative Michael Honda (D-CA) and U.S. Senator Jack Reed (D-RI) introduced an education bill today calling for improved educator preparation programs to ensure teachers, principals, and other educators are better prepared to meet the challenges in today's classrooms.

Rep Honda and Senator Reed – in response to research that shows teacher quality and school leadership are the most important in-school factors in raising student achievement – introduced the Educator Preparation Reform Act to put in place new reporting standards that provide public transparency on key performance measurements for all teacher preparation programs, traditional and alternative, and to ensure that new teachers are prepared to provide the effective teaching that all students deserve.

“Gone are the days of having outside educators swoop in and do short-term service in poverty areas in order to ‘save’ them from their education ills,” said Rep Honda, an educator with over three decades in the field of education, as a classroom teacher, principal and school board member. “This type of approach doesn’t solve long-term societal problems. Communities, especially the underserved, must seek indigenous, sustainable solutions to their unique challenges and problems. □ This bill empowers communities and high-needs school districts to develop high quality teachers and principals for their underserved communities.”

The Educator Preparation Reform Act creates more rigorous reporting on admissions standards, clinical preparation, placement, retention, and teacher performance, including student learning outcomes. It strengthens accountability for teacher-preparation, at all levels, by requiring public report cards that measure the program's performance quality, while also offering the option for states and institutions to implement a valid, reliable teacher performance assessment that determines individual candidate readiness.

Additionally, the bill makes significant improvements to the Teacher Quality Partnership program by expanding residency programs to include principals and providing partnership flexibility in meeting the instructional needs of local school districts. It would also reform TEACH Grants to focus grant aid on future educators who are completing their preparation programs.

The bill has broad support across the education community, including American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education, National Association of Elementary School Principals, National Association of Secondary School Principals, and 18 other leading education organizations.

Governor Bob Wise, President, Alliance for Excellent Education: “Meeting expectations of college and career readiness is a complex undertaking and requires that teachers have multiple

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kinds of knowledge and skills. Teachers must be provided with the resources necessary to deliver instruction, align curriculum, and implement assessments aligned to college- and career-ready standards. The Educator Preparation Reform Act would invest in the nation's students by investing in their teachers. The Alliance for Excellent Education thanks Senator Reed and Rep. Honda for their leadership and looks forward to working with them to advance this legislation."

Antonio R. Flores, President and CEO, Hispanic Association of Colleges and Universities

: "We have an overwhelming need to increase the number of well-prepared Hispanic teachers and leaders in today's schools. We are pleased to support this bill as it will make a big difference in expanding the diversity of the workforce that is so critical to the success of minority students."

Sharon P. Robinson, President and CEO, American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education:

"AACTE is proud to support The Educator Preparation Reform Act. Senator Reed and Congressman Honda have shown impressive leadership in putting forth this thoughtful, progressive and workable approach to reforming educator preparation."

Michael A. Resnick, Associate Executive Director, National School Boards Association:

"The Educator Preparation Reform Act takes a positive step toward establishing incentives for locally driven innovations to close achievement gaps and improve excellence and equity in education. On behalf of the 90,000 school board members who govern our nation's public school districts, the National School Boards Association (NSBA) is writing to express support for the goals and direction of the Educator Preparation Reform Act (EPRA). The EPRA reauthorizes Title II of the Higher Education Act, preserving and creating new opportunities for local districts and schools to increase the number of effective teachers and school leaders for high need subjects and geographic areas. NSBA supports language in the bill to provide funding, research, technical assistance and other resources to school districts, as well as the flexibility to establish programs that address local needs and priorities. NSBA appreciates your leadership on this."

Wendy D. Puriefoy, President, Public Education Network: "A key element to this bill is the incentive for high needs K-12 schools, community organizations and higher education to partner in providing yearlong teacher residency programs. As many of our local members can attest, residency programs provide an essential pathway for teachers to become fully prepared, supported, empowered, and accountable. The beneficiaries are students themselves with special needs who deserve well prepared teachers and committed teachers who deserve the best preparation and support our nation can provide. Public Education Network salutes Senator Reed and Representative Honda for introducing a bill where parents can be assured that their child's teacher is indeed highly qualified."