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December 11, 2017

The Honorable Virginia Foxx
Chairwomen
Education & Workforce Committee
2262 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Bobby Scott
Ranking Member
Education & Workforce Committee
1201 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairwoman Foxx & Ranking Member Scott:

The Council for Exceptional Children (CEC) is deeply concerned that the Promoting Real Opportunity, Success and Prosperity Through Education Reform (PROSPER) Act will undermine the preparation of highly effective special educators and access to higher education opportunities for youth with disabilities. The Council for Exceptional Children is a professional association of educators dedicated to advancing the success of children with exceptionalities. We accomplish our mission through advocacy, standards, and professional development.

The PROSPER Act, H.R.4508 seeks to change or repeal many successful provisions of the current Higher Education Opportunity Act (HEOA) including:

- Elimination of Title II, Teacher Quality Enhancement. Title II currently funds the Teacher Quality Partnership (TQP) Grant Program, which provides funding for teacher residencies and other clinically-focused teacher preparation. Reporting requirements for teacher preparation programs for accountability purposes have been repealed. These requirements currently are a benchmark for quality assurance and transparency.
- Elimination of the TEACH Grant Program. The TEACH Grants have provided federal student grants to become a teacher in a high-need field, including special education, in a low income area.
- Elimination of three teacher loan forgiveness programs; Public Service Loan Forgiveness, Loan Forgiveness for Teachers and Loan Forgiveness for Service in Areas of National Need.
- Elimination of grants that increase accessibility for students with disabilities on college campuses. The PROSPER Act eliminates grant programs that support faculty who work with students with disabilities and provide accessible materials in college.

The PROSPER Act authorizes the:

- Creation of a new apprenticeship program that potentially could reduce the quality and rigor of the preparation of teacher candidates.

In addition, the PROSPER Act fails to:

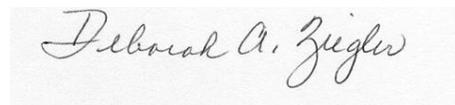
- Include an essential component of the RISE Act that would require colleges and universities to accept a student's individualized education program or 504 plan as evidence of their disability.

The RISE Act is a bi-partisan proposal that seeks to help more students with disabilities get in the door of their college's Disability Service Office and seek the accommodations they need to succeed.

As Congress moves forward in its reauthorization of HEOA, CEC strongly urges you to consider our concerns and recommendations to ensure the preparation of a diverse and highly effective workforce and youth with disabilities have increased access and improved supports to higher education. It is critical that the reauthorization of HEOA does not undermine access to and the quality of postsecondary education for our nation's youth. The PROSPER Act falls short of that promise. CEC, at this time cannot support this bill. The final reauthorized bill must address the serious and persistent issues in higher education associated with access, affordability, accountability and quality in postsecondary education. CEC looks forward to working with Congress to ensure the provision of the identification, cultivation and continued support of a highly effective workforce.

Please feel free to contact me at debz@cec.sped.org if you have any questions or need additional information.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Deborah A. Ziegler". The signature is written in black ink on a light-colored, slightly textured background.

Deborah A. Ziegler, Ed.D.
Director
Policy and Advocacy