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March 22, 2023

The Honorable Kevin McCarthy  
Speaker  
U.S. House of Representatives  
H-232, The Capitol  
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Hakeem Jeffries  
Minority Leader  
U.S. House of Representatives  
H-204, The Capitol  
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Speaker McCarthy and Minority Leader Jeffries:

AASA, The School Superintendents Association, representing 13,000 school district leaders across the United States, writes to share our view of H.R. 5, the Parents Bill of Rights.

Superintendents know that parents are their children's first and most important educators, which is why effective family engagement at the state and local level is one of the key determinants of student and school success. As superintendents who serve at the pleasure of school boards selected by parents, families and community members, it is critical that every child and family who walks through our doors on a daily basis feels welcome and supported in our buildings and classrooms. We know an educational environment that connects and engages families will ensure greater success for all students. We believe that every family should have the opportunity to be an active participant in their child's educational experience and connect directly with their child's professional educators, while working in concert with school staff and administrators to maximize their child's success.

As a national organization representing the CEOs of school systems, our view has always been that local control in K-12 education is not only what is best, but what is most appropriate. **It is for this reason that we must oppose H.R.5.** As champions of local control, AASA has long opposed top-down, prescriptive federal education policies that dictate how districts utilize limited federal funding, pressure districts to adopt specific standards or curriculum or create national teacher or educator standards and requirements.

Parents are the locus of local control in education as they provide input on local policies and practices created at school board meetings, connect directly with superintendents, principals and teachers in class and school-wide events, and have access to any and all educational materials, platforms and curriculum their children are utilizing inside and outside of school.

The Parents Bill of Rights is full of district mandates without any funding for these new and burdensome requirements that will be a place a disproportionate hardship on small and rural schools. Provisions that would require a district to print out the curriculum for parental review and comment, send notices about every guest speaker that may address a class, require mental health personnel to contact parents if a student discloses any mental health concern and share a list of every professional

development opportunity the district provides to educators and staff are just a few examples of extreme federal overreach in local education policy.

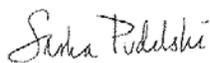
Aside from AASA's federalism concerns and the many new unfunded mandates that H.R.5 creates, there are also practical implementation concerns with how the legislation would disrupt learning in classrooms and make it incredibly challenging for educators to meet the significant educational needs of students. For example, giving parents the ability to opt out of the collection, disclosure, or use of personal information collected from students and commonly used education technology in the classroom would make it nearly impossible for schools to meet the educational needs of students and use a host of online diagnostic, differentiated and adaptive assessments and tools to measure a student's understanding, proficiency and growth academically. This change would leave teachers not only ill-equipped to address learning loss in a post-pandemic educational environment thereby exacerbating educational inequities, but forced to find and make use of resources, curriculum, and assessments from several decades ago.

H.R. 5 would make it more challenging to ensure our schools are safe and welcoming environments for every student. The legislation would make it more challenging to direct students to appropriate mental health supports in schools thereby risking the safety of all students and educators. As an example, a counselor who suspects a child may be abused would be required to notify parents and get a signed parental opt-in before the counselor can assess the child's health, safety and well-being at home. The bill would also undermine districts' ability to collect anonymized survey data to gauge student safety and well-being in school and it would make our transgender and nonbinary students more likely to disengage or drop out of school.

While we appreciate the robust discussion about student privacy and support a reauthorization of Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act and Protection of Pupil Rights Amendment that will clarify critical issues and update the law to appropriately respond to the twenty-first century learning environments in our schools, the changes to FERPA and PPRA proposed by H.R. 5 are not those AASA can support. Similarly, we welcome a conversation on how to reauthorize the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, but we do not support piecemeal changes to critical provisions in Title I of the law and urge Republicans and Democrats to come together—as they always have—to craft comprehensive ESEA policies to better our nations' schools, increase student achievement and ensure our schools are welcoming places for every child and family.

Thank you for considering our views and it is our hope that we can work with both sides of the dais to find common ground this Congress on the policy and funding issues of greatest importance to school district leaders.

Sincerely,



Sasha Pudelski  
Director of Advocacy  
AASA, The School Superintendents Association