



June 14, 2019

The Honorable Lamar Alexander
Chairman
U.S. Senate Committee on
Health, Education Labor & Pensions
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Patty Murray
Ranking Member
U.S. Senate Committee on
Health, Education Labor & Pensions
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Alexander and Ranking Member Murray:

The NEA enthusiastically supports Sens. Braun and Sinema's Consider Teachers Act of 2019, S. 1387. The bill would benefit many of NEA's 3 million members and other aspiring educators across the nation. By addressing problems with the TEACH Grant Program, it would encourage students to pursue careers in education and consider teaching in high-need fields or schools.

The Teacher Education Assistance for College and Higher Education Grant Program promises \$4,000 in grant assistance per year to students who are completing course work needed to begin teaching careers. Once they graduate from their programs, they must serve for at least four years as full-time teachers in a high-need field, or teach in schools that serve low-income families. The program gives individuals eight years in which to complete their service requirement. If they do not fulfill the obligation, the grant converts to a Federal Direct Unsubsidized Stafford Loan.

Currently, paperwork issues and other problems mean many educators are not receiving the promised benefits. In fact, the program has a 66-percent conversion rate. The U.S. Department of Education released a reconsideration process for teachers whose loans were unfairly or incorrectly converted. However, that is not a permanent fix.

The Consider Teachers Act of 2019 would:

- Codify the reconsideration process and have the Education Department continue the process, regardless of a change in Administration or leadership;
- Revert loans that successfully make it through the reconsideration process and discharge any accumulated interest fees; and
- Fix some of the mishaps in the program's administration by outlining yearly deadlines and notification requirements.

We can only provide America's students with the best education possible if we encourage the best and brightest individuals to become educators. The Consider Teachers Act of 2019 will address the challenges that are keeping TEACH from achieving its worthy goals.

Sincerely,

Marc Egan
Director of Government Relations
National Education Association