May 7, 2015

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| The Honorable Chris Murphy  United States Senate  136 Hart Senate Office Building  Washington, DC 20510 | The Honorable Corey Booker  United States Senate  141 Hart Senate Office Building  Washington, DC 20510 |

Dear Senators Murphy and Booker:

On behalf of the nonprofit venture philanthropy fund New Profit’s nonpartisan policy initiative, America Forward and its Reimagine Learning initiative, we would like to express our strong support for S. 811, the Supportive School Climate Act of 2015,and thank you for your leadership on this critically important issue.

America Forward and Reimagine Learning are working together to create learner-centered systems that personalize learning, foster student agency, promote mastery, and provide real-time data and actionable guidance to students, educators, leaders, and families to improve academic and social emotional outcomes for all children. A learner-centered system would provide stakeholders with the necessary information to fully understand the student’s strengths, challenges, and progress, and would pair that information with guidance on research-based responses. It would ensure that the responses lead to further discovery of what interventions and instruction work best for every child.

We know that every student has their own set of unique strengths and challenges as a learner. Some students face challenges that create significant barriers to learning like learning disabilities, violence, food insecurity and trauma. Our initiative is dedicated to making a powerful difference for these students. Especially for students dealing with these systems of barriers, punishments like suspensions and expulsions merely exacerbate negative outcomes, including drop-outs and recidivism. Instead of punishing these students, we should be focused on identifying and implementing positive, evidence-based supports and interventions that help them grow and thrive in school.

We commend your proposal’s emphasis on positive, student-centered support systems in schools, and your push for meaningful engagement between schools and the juvenile justice system. We believe, as you do, in the importance of creating school environments that are supportive of the complex needs of individual students – especially those students dealing with various forms of trauma – and favor evidence-based strategies that promote positive behavior over punitive consequences like suspensions and expulsions. Furthermore, we support the proposed legislation’s focus on providing technical assistance to state and local education professionals – a good opportunity to engage high-quality external partners – and on transparent reporting of disaggregated data.

We believe S. 811 is an important step towards addressing – through evidence-based, personalized interventions – the social emotional challenges that create enormous barriers to learning for too many students. We thank you, again, for your dedication to addressing this issue. If America Forward and Reimagine Learning can be of any assistance in the future, please do not hesitate to contact us.

Sincerely,

America Forward and Members of the Reimagine Learning Focus Fund