



NEWS RELEASE

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Commissioner Blomstedt Testifies at Senate Hearing on ESSA

Nebraska Commissioner of Education Matthew L. Blomstedt joined two other state education chiefs September 25 to testify at the U.S. Senate Health, Education, Labor and Pensions Committee hearing, The Every Student Succeeds Act: States Leading the Way.

Commissioner Blomstedt, Delaware Department of Education Secretary Susan Bunting, and South Carolina Department of Education Superintendent Molly Spearman shared with committee members how flexibility in the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) was enabling them to work with parents, educators, students and others in their state to create a system that supports the success of all students.

Nebraska Commissioner Blomstedt explained that ESSA gave Nebraska new tools and opportunities for supporting our teachers and school leaders. "We have worked with stakeholders to develop activities under Title II that align with initiatives already underway in the state on improving educator effectiveness and increasing equal access to effective educators," he noted in written testimony. "This work resulted in the creation of an Educator Workforce Index that measures the quality of a district's educator performance assessment system, and the extent to which students are exposed to inexperienced, out-of-field, or unqualified teachers and school leaders.

"We expect to continue to improve that effort and anticipate the approach will drive ongoing conversations and efforts on educator quality and equity. In particular, it should support attainment of our strategic plan goal that, by 2020, all Nebraska districts have a research-based evaluation system for all certificated staff," Blomstedt said.

"The law rightly asks states to work closely with stakeholders – teachers, principals, parents, students, tribal leaders, and community organizations – to do what is best for the students in their state and local communities," Delaware Secretary Bunting wrote in written testimony.

"Delaware thoroughly embraced this opportunity and involved a diverse group of stakeholders in not only writing its ESSA plan but also in myriad other ESSA-connected activities," she wrote. "The plan's design was a collaborative effort between the Department of Education and an ESSA Advisory Council, whose members ran the gamut from the president of the state's superintendents' association to a Nanticoke tribe member, from legislators to PTO officers, and from businessmen to the Executive Director of the Latin American Community Center. Together they crafted a plan that strikes an appropriate balance by setting a high bar to ensure all kids receive an equitable education while making sure those closest to students have the flexibility they need to make critical decisions on how to reach mutually established targets."

In South Carolina Superintendent Spearman's testimony, she addressed the development of a team of transformation coaches to build capacity and provide targeted assistance in the schools that need it most. "Transformation coaches support South Carolina's educators and school leaders by being 'boots on the ground' daily in our lowest performing schools to strategically guide their efforts. These coaches, who are fully funded by and employees of the state, range from a former national principal of the year to strong classroom and district award-winning leaders. They are selected based on their content experience and leadership qualities to be agents of support and change. They truly have answered the call to serve in our most underprivileged areas, often times located in rural communities nearly 40 miles from the nearest Walmart.

"In South Carolina, we strongly believe schools will only be able to achieve excellence when the performance of all students, including those in historically underserved subgroups, meet expectations," Spearman said.

Please click here for the written testimony from [Bunting](#), [Blomstedt](#) and [Spearman](#).

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