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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contact: Daniella Gibbs-Leger
Dleger@americanprogress.org
202-682-1611

Joint Statement from the Alliance for Excellent Education, the Center for American Progress, Jobs for the Future, and the National Council of La Raza on the Introduction of the Graduation Promise Act

Today, four national organizations committed to improving educational outcomes for America's high school students applaud the introduction of the Graduation Promise Act. The Graduation Promise Act is designed to improve high schools and reduce dropout rates, and was introduced today by U.S. Senators Jeff Bingaman, D-NM, Richard Burr, R-NC, and Health, Education, Pensions, and Labor Committee Chairman Edward Kennedy. The Graduation Promise Act is enthusiastically supported by the Alliance for Excellent Education, the Center for American Progress, Jobs for the Future, and the National Council of La Raza.

"America is facing a dropout crisis," said John Podesta, President and CEO of the Center for American Progress. "This crisis was the impetus behind our report, [Addressing America's Dropout Challenge](#), co-authored with Jobs for the Future, and is the big flashing sign saying 'Act Now' that Congress should heed."

In America today, two in three students leave high school unprepared for college or the modern workplace. The U.S. Department of Labor projects that almost 90 percent of the fastest growing U.S. jobs require at least some postsecondary education. The nation's fifteen-year-olds, when measured against their counterparts in other industrialized nations, rank fifteenth in reading, twenty-third in math, and thirtieth in problem-solving skills.

"We know what can and should be done to end the dropout crisis in this country," said Gov. Bob Wise, President of the Alliance for Excellent Education and former governor of West Virginia. "By targeting resources to solutions proven to work, the Graduation Promise Act turns knowledge into action. These Senators have shown the will; their legislation shows the way. Congress should pass the Graduation Promise Act to help make 'every child a graduate' a reality."

For minority and low-income students, the situation is especially dire. High school students living in low-income families drop out of school at six times the rate of their peers from high-income families, and only about 55 percent of Black students and 52 percent of Hispanic students graduate on time from high school with a regular diploma, compared to 78 percent of White students.



“Forty years ago, the United States led the world in high school graduation rates; it now ranks seventeenth,” said Marlene B. Seltzer, President and CEO of Jobs for the Future. “We are moving in the wrong direction. The Graduation Promise Act answers the need to move forward and ensure that all students stay in school and graduate ready for college and work.”

“It’s unacceptable that slightly more than half of Latino and African American students graduate from high school,” said Janet Murguia, President and CEO of the National Council of La Raza, the largest national Hispanic civil rights and advocacy organization in the U.S. “The Graduation Promise Act will help reverse these trends by focusing attention and resources on this critical issue.”

The Graduation Promise Act authorizes \$2.5 billion in new funding to:

- Create a federal-state-local secondary school reform partnership focused on transforming the nation’s lowest performing high schools;
- Build capacity for high school improvement and provide resources to ensure high school educators and students facing the highest challenges receive the support they need to succeed;
- Strengthen state systems to identify, differentiate among, and target the level of reform and resources necessary to improve low performing high schools and ensure transparency and accountability for that process;
- Advance the research and development needed to ensure a robust supply of highly effective secondary school models for those most at risk of being left behind, and identify the most effective reforms;
- Support states to align their policies and systems to meet the goal of college and career-ready graduation for all students.

The Graduation Promise Act will be highlighted during a hearing of the Senate Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions Committee on high school reform on Tuesday, April 24, at 10 a.m.

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