

H.R. 610 “Choices in Education Action of 2017”

House Bill 610, also known as the “Choices in Education Act of 2017”, has been introduced and critics say that the passing of this bill would limit the authority of the U.S. Department of Education to basically being allowed to award block grants to certain qualified states. The main objective of this bill are as follows:

- Start a voucher system for public school children ages 5-17 to choose alternative school placements. While these vouchers would fund options to allow some parents to enroll their children in private schools or homeschool, it may also waive or remove their rights as a special education student to receive a Free and Appropriate Public Education (FAPE).
- Repeals the Nutritional Act of 2012 (No Hungry Kids Act) which provides nutritional standards in school breakfast and lunch plans. It would reduce the availability of healthy, nutritious meals which may be the only nutritious food that children in lower income families have in a day.
- Eliminates the Elementary and Education Act of 1965 (ESSA), which is the nation’s educational law and provides equal opportunity in education. It would remove:
 - Any accountability and programs that serve struggling learners, AP classes, ESL classes, classes for minorities such as Native Americans, Rural Education, Education for the Homeless, School Safety (Gun-Free schools), Monitoring and Compliance and Federal Accountability Programs.
 - Access for children with disabilities from general education curriculum, accommodations on assessments, concepts of Universal Design for Learning.
- There is no mention of IDEA or FAPE which would severely jeopardize the educational future of many special education students and limit their potential futures as independent and productive citizens.

Currently there are only 4 co-sponsors of H.R. 610. For the bill to proceed, a Senate version must also be drafted and both bills must pass through the two sides of Congress. If parents wish to express their concerns regarding the proposed legislation of H.R. 610 or a similar bill in the Senate, they may contact their congressman at one of the following links:

Senators: <https://www.senate.gov/senators/contact/>

House Representative: <http://www.house.gov/representatives/>

Link to House Bill 610: <https://www.congress.gov/bill/115th-congress/house-bill/610/text>

<https://www.romper.com/p/how-to-call-your-senator-about-house-bill-610-the-first-betsy-devos-education-bill-42933>