

WASHINGTON, DC - Today, Congressman Robert C. "Bobby" Scott (VA-03) introduced the "Every Student Counts Act," legislation that would reduce the high school dropout rate and prioritize high school graduation for all of America's students. Rep. Scott first introduced the bill in the 110th Congress and his hope is that it will be included in congressional efforts to reform education.

Attaining a high school diploma is a student's first step toward becoming an educated member of the American workforce. According to the 2008 Department of Labor report entitled "America's Dynamic Workforce," by 2016 almost 90 percent of the fastest growing and best paying jobs in the United States will require at least some postsecondary education. And yet, approximately one in three students who enter ninth grade each year fails to graduate from high school four years later. For students of color the statistics are even worse. Almost half of Black and Latino students who enter the ninth grade fail to graduate from high school four years later.

In addition, nearly 2,000 high schools – roughly 12 percent of all secondary schools in the United States – produce about half of the nation's dropouts. In general, the number of seniors in these so called "dropout factories" is routinely 60 percent or less than the number of freshmen three years earlier. Additionally, these schools produce almost three-fourths of black dropouts and two-thirds of Hispanic dropouts nationwide.

"The current high school accountability system is failing our students and undermining our future as a globally competitive nation. The major advantage America has in the global economy is an educated workforce. We can't allow – or afford – any of our nation's high students to dropout and not reach their full potential," Rep. Scott said.

The Every Student Counts Act will prioritize graduation for all of our nation's high school students by:

- Creating a consistent and accurate calculation of graduation rates across all fifty states to ensure comparability and transparency;
- Focusing school improvement activities on all students and closing achievement gaps by requiring that graduation rate calculations be disaggregated by race, ethnicity, gender, disability status, migrant status, English proficiency, and status as economically disadvantaged for both accountability and reporting purposes;
- Ensuring that graduation rates are a significant factor in determining AYP in addition to test scores;
- Implementing aggressive, attainable, and uniform annual growth requirements as part of AYP to ensure consistent increases in graduation rates for all students;

- Giving credit to schools, districts and states for eventually graduating students who take longer than four years to graduate while maintaining the primacy of graduating the great preponderance of all students in four years;
- Providing incentives for schools, districts and states to create programs to serve students who have already dropped out of school or are over-age or under credited; and
- Providing technical assistance to schools, districts and states in their efforts to collect and streamline graduation data.

Ultimately, the Act will ensure consistent increases in graduation rates for all of the nation's high school students by meeting annual, research-based benchmarks with the long-term goal of reaching a national graduate rate of 90 percent. The Every Student Counts Act builds on the National Governors Association's Graduation Rate Compact that was signed by all 50 of the nation's governors in 2005.

"In order to keep our economy strong we must invest in the education of all of our children. If we cut the high school dropout rate in half, new graduates can contribute billions of dollars to our gross national product and at the same time create tens of thousands of jobs. Education and a prosperous economy go hand-in-hand," said Congressman Rubén Hinojosa, Ranking Member of the Subcommittee on Higher Education and Workforce Training.

"With this bill, I hope that we can make great strides toward graduating more of America's students and preparing them to succeed in college, the workforce, the military, and ultimately in life," Rep. Scott concluded.

The bill is also supported by 26 national and state education, civil rights, and advocacy organizations, including the Alliance for Excellent Education, America's Promise Alliance, American Association of University Women, American School Counselor Association, Bazelon Center for Mental Health Law, Council of Administrators of Special Education, First Focus, Knowledge Alliance, Learning Disabilities Association of America, League of United Latin American Citizens, National Association of School Psychologists, National Association of Secondary School Principals, National Association of State Directors of Career Technical Education Consortium, National Association for the Education of Homeless Children and Youth, National Collaboration for Youth, National Council of La Raza, National Council for Learning Disabilities, National Indian Education Association, National PTA, Project GRAD, Public Education Network, School Social Work Association of America, Southeast Asia Resource Action Center (SEARAC), Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages, United Way Worldwide, and Youth Service America.

The list is expected to grow.

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