March 17, 2023

I am writing on behalf of the National Center for Parent Leadership, Advocacy, and Community Empowerment (National PLACE) to strongly support House Resolution 219, the Bill of Rights for Students and Parents, and oppose the misnamed HR 5 Parents Bill of Rights Act.

National PLACE’s mission is to strengthen the voice and impact of families and family-led organizations at decision-making tables, particularly those who currently face the most barriers to effective participation and whose children face the greatest challenges and disparities in access and outcomes. As a national, family-led organization with 70 national, state, and local family-led organization members including Parent Centers, Family to Family Health Information Centers, Federation of Families for Children’s Mental Health chapters, and Parent to Parent USA affiliates, we advocate for policies that enable families to have a meaningful role in decision-making regarding their children across systems.

Many of our members serve families whose children would be harmed by HR 5 – children with disabilities or special health/mental health needs, low-income children, children of color or who are immigrant, children whose families have limited English proficiency, and children who themselves are LGBTQ+ or whose parents are LGBTQ+. HR 219 recognizes the importance of calling out the value of all students and their parents, and not just a few who are frightened by or opposed to equity across “isms.”

National PLACE’s members have identified the following rights as most critical for parents to support their effective participation in the education of their children and facilitate their influence on policies and practices at the family, program and system levels while not undermining the effective functioning of schools and school systems:

1. The right to be *treated with respect* by all school staff including but not limited to educators, administrators, related service providers, clerical staff, and school security personnel.
2. The right to be *involved as an equal partner in making decisions about their child's education.*
3. The right for them and their child *to be treated equitably and to not face discrimination* on the basis of race, ethnicity, language, immigrant status, disability, special health/mental health need, gender or gender identity, religion, LGBTQ+ status, or other characteristics.
4. The right to *access their child's educational records* in a timely manner and to protect the confidentiality of those records unless they give prior written consent.
5. The right to be *involved in decision-making at the school and district level,* including PTA/PTSO, bilingual parent advisory council, special education parent advisory council, Title I Parent Council, etc.
6. The right to be *informed about their child's progress* (academic, social-emotional, behavioral, functional life skill, etc.) on a regular basis.
7. The right to *accurate, up-to-date information about their child, the school, the district, the state, etc. that is easy-to-understand* (plain language, sign language, Braille, non-English language for a parent with limited English proficiency)
8. The right for their child and family *to "see themselves" and their history* in the curriculum, school activities, etc.
9. The right to *visit their child's school and classroom with reasonable advance notice*.
10. The right to *information about the curriculum, educator qualifications,* etc.

These rights are supported by the language in House Resolution 219, but are either opposed or taken to extremes by HR 5. That is why National PLACE endorses House Resolution 219. As a member of the Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights, we also sign onto the statement by their Education Task Force. Parents of children who already face discrimination, exclusion, under-recognition, and sometimes even hatred because of who they are, cannot afford any additional barriers to the education of their children and to their effective engagement. HR 5 would amplify the voices of a small minority of parents who want to impose their will on, and at the expense of, the vast majority of parents who see things differently – who want their children to learn social-emotional skills, who want their children to see themselves in the curriculum, who want their children to learn about others who are different from themselves, who want their children to learn the truth and not a white-washed history (“those who forget the past are condemned to repeat it”), who want their children to be accepted regardless of their personal characteristics.

Please reach out to us with any questions or to discuss our position in greater detail. Thank you.