



Lobbying groups push back against funding equity provisions

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Dive Brief:

- Under ESSA, the federal education department has proposed a rule requiring school districts to disburse equitable funding to schools with large numbers of poor children — a suggestion that has prompted a number of education organizations to team up and send a letter of disapproval to acting U.S. Secretary of Education John King.
- The letter asks King to “refrain from defining terms and aspects of the new law... especially as it relates to the ‘supplement, not supplant’ provision.”
- According to the New York Times, school districts across the U.S. that have high levels of students from impoverished backgrounds get \$1,200 less in per-pupil funding than districts with less poverty; others spend 1/3 less per-pupil in disadvantaged schools.

Dive Insight:

The debate over funding formulas and how best to level the playing ground is still rooted in a question over what, exactly, helps poor schools the most. That's because education leaders are still discussing whether inequity in school performance stems from unequal funding or unequal usage of funding. The Cato Institute recently released a report saying no link exists between between spending and academic achievement.

At the same time, there's no arguing with the fact that funding disparities do have consequences. A recent six-month investigation by 20 NPR member stations found great discrepancies in school spending across individual districts, state-by-state. That investigation's findings coincided with findings from the Education Law Center (ELC), in a report entitled "Is School Funding Fair? A National Report Card."

That report found the majority of current school funding formulas across the U.S. are "unfair and inequitable," with "little improvement over the past five years in those states that consistently fail to direct additional funding to districts with high levels of need, as measured by student poverty." Disparity can manifest in achievement gaps, since majority-white schools

generally receive more funding, while the overall presence of more students of color in U.S. schools has been shown to have an immediate impact on funding. Kentucky and Tennessee are now grappling with new funding proposals designed to combat the disparity.

Recommended Reading

The New York Times: [Why There's an Uproar Over Trying to Increase Funding for Poor Schools](#)