



Great Public Schools
for Every Student

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Committee on Education and the Workforce
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Representative:

On behalf of the 3.2 million members of the National Education Association (NEA), we would like to express our opposition to the Setting New Priorities in Education Spending Act (H.R. 1891). While we agree that a certain amount of program consolidation is needed to strengthen the impact and benefits of federal funding across the country, we are opposed to an approach which simply repeals programs in order to cut funding for public schools. Passing this bill would cut \$413 million for public schools at a time when students and their families are struggling to make ends meet. In fact, the proposed cuts come on the heels of the final FY 2011 continuing resolution, which cut funding for programs for elementary and secondary education by over \$750 million. There is no indication that any of this funding will be replaced in subsequent legislation in the 112th Congress.

We are particularly concerned about the wholesale elimination of a number of programs meeting critical needs. For example:

- **Educational Technology State Grants** were designed to facilitate the comprehensive and integrated use of educational technology into instruction and curricula to improve teaching and student achievement. Particular emphasis is placed on helping ensure that students and teachers in high-poverty, high-need schools have access to educational technology comparable to that of students and teachers in other schools. Today, too many schools still lack the equipment, support systems, and/or professional development to create the 21st century learning environments students need and deserve. NEA's surveys of our own members indicate that many find insufficient support in utilizing technology for instructional purposes. Lower income students are impacted the most by these technology gaps, as they most likely to rely entirely on public schools for technology access. In reality, some students are being excluded from full participation in 21st century life. Elimination of this program would seriously undermine efforts to prepare all students for success and ensure our nation a competitive workforce. In addition, small investments made by this program help to leverage larger federal investments in E-rate and Broadband Technology Opportunity grants.
- The **Advanced Credentialing** program provides grants to support teachers seeking advanced certification through high-quality professional teacher enhancement programs – such as the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards (NBPTS) – that improve teaching and learning. The NBPTS improves teaching and student learning. National Board Certified Teachers are highly accomplished educators who meet high and rigorous standards. Elimination of this funding would decrease the ability of over 20,000 teachers and other educators annually in all 50 states and D.C. to seek National Board Certification, and impede the participation of Board Certified Teachers in school improvement efforts.

- **Parent Information Resource Centers (PIRCs)** are the only federal program dedicated to increasing family engagement. The program annually serves 16.4 million parents, primarily within low income and Title I communities where the achievement gap is the greatest. PIRCs play a key role in implementing or collaborating with other programs to deliver parent training and other resources to many minority and recent immigrant families. Without this funding stream, parent education and parent outreach programs for these communities could be lost. Parents and caregivers are students' first teachers. We need to support their involvement in students' education and encourage their involvement in school activities and plans.
- The **Striving Readers** program works to raise the reading achievement levels of middle and high-school aged students in Title I-eligible schools with significant numbers of students reading below grade level. Striving Readers helps improve literacy skills by helping states, districts, and schools develop comprehensive literacy plans that ensure every student reads and writes on grade level. Better literacy skills improve achievement in all subjects, including math and science, improve graduation rates, and improve students' chances of succeeding in college.
- **Literacy Through School Libraries** helps improve literacy skills and academic achievement of students by providing students with increased access to up-to-date school library materials and resources. According to the American Library Association, studies have repeatedly demonstrated that students in schools with strong school library programs learn more, get better grades, and score higher on standardized tests even when differences in socioeconomic factors are taken into consideration.
- The **Elementary and Secondary School Counseling** program supports the hiring of qualified personnel to expand counseling services for students. Counseling programs staffed by professional school counselors, school psychologists, and school social workers help all students in the areas of student learning, personal/social development, and career development, ensuring that students become productive, well-adjusted adults. Effective counseling programs are important to the school climate and in improving student achievement. The lack of school counselors and other social services personnel is of particular concern in many low-income school districts, given the increased pressure on student performance and the social, emotional, and behavioral issues that impact achievement in high-needs schools.

Without a more explicit understanding that the functions of the programs listed above will be preserved in future legislation considered for the 2012 fiscal year--as a recognition of how critical they are to the provision of a high quality education--we cannot offer our support to this approach. One out of every five children in America is currently living in poverty. They need more support, not less. We, therefore, urge your opposition to H.R. 1891.

Sincerely,



Kim Anderson
Director of Government Relations



Mary Kusler
Manager of Federal Advocacy