



Urban Serving Universities

101 Constitution Avenue, NW, Suite 600 West, Washington, DC 20001

Arizona State University

California State University –
10 Member Schools

City University of New York
City College

Florida International
University

Georgia State University

Indiana University-Purdue
University Indianapolis

Morgan State University

North Carolina State
University

Ohio State University

Portland State University

Temple University

University of Akron

University of Alabama -
Birmingham

University of Central Florida

University of Cincinnati

University of Colorado –
Denver

University of Houston

University of Illinois at
Chicago

University of Louisville

University of Memphis

University of Minnesota

University of Missouri –
Kansas City

University of New Mexico

University of New Orleans

University of Texas – Austin

Virginia Commonwealth
University

Wichita State University

November 5, 2007

The Honorable Edward M. Kennedy
Chairman
Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions
428 Senate Dirksen Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Michael B. Enzi
Ranking Member
Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions
428 Senate Dirksen Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Kennedy and Ranking Member Enzi:

On behalf of the Urban Serving Universities (USU) Coalition, we are pleased to submit recommendations for the reauthorization of Title II of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA). In particular, we urge you to expand and target opportunities to improve teacher effectiveness in urban classrooms as related to various grant programs throughout Title II.

USU is a national coalition of diverse public, research universities led by their university presidents, chancellors, and provosts, located in urban centers in each of the four geographic regions in the country. Our institutions are deeply committed to improving student academic performance and reducing achievement gaps by promoting teacher recruitment, preparation, induction, and retention in high-need urban schools. USU's Urban Educator Corps, a consortium of 17 of our institutions that collectively work together to improve current practices, alone prepares over 20 percent of the nation's future urban educators. The consortium has collaborated to create virtual curriculum; rubrics and benchmarks on excellence in urban teacher education; and databases to track teacher shortages and certification levels. A number of USU's member institutions also participate in the Council of the Great City Colleges of Education, an affiliate of the Council of the Great City Schools, which is composed of deans of schools education that work with urban school leaders.

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Urban school districts face many educational challenges unique to cities. Their student bodies are more likely to consist of a higher percentage of minorities and come from low-income families and non-English speaking homes than students from other school districts. The graduation rates and student performance on state exams for urban schools typically fall below state and national averages. In addition, these districts experience larger average school enrollments and higher pupil to teacher ratios. All these factors greatly impact the ability of urban districts to recruit, train, and retain highly qualified teachers, particularly in high-need subjects such as mathematics and science.

Urban serving institutions possess a broad range of skills and resources – intellectual, human, technological, and social – to play a pivotal role in pre-service and in-service activities specifically designed for urban educators. For example, nearly three-quarters of Great City Colleges of Education emphasize teaching in urban schools as part of their curriculum, and 84 percent offer special placement programs or other incentives to interest graduates in urban teaching positions. As the Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions moves forward with introducing a bill to reauthorize ESEA, USU recommends the following provisions be added to Title II:

- Add “urban serving university” to the list of entities that may be included as part of the eligible partnership for various grants.
- Create a pilot program under Subpart 5 – National Activities for urban school districts and urban universities to design and implement programs to improve teacher effectiveness specifically in urban schools and communities.
- Establish a clearinghouse under Subpart 5 – National Activities to collect, analyze, and disseminate information on improving teacher effectiveness in urban schools and communities.

Attached you will find USU’s proposed legislative recommendations for Title II. USU looks forward to working with you on advancing this important piece of legislation. Through this and similar endeavors to tie urban universities with their communities, we can continue to close the achievement gap, increase student preparation for postsecondary education, and ultimately bolster our nation’s economic competitiveness.

Sincerely,



Nancy L. Zimpher
Chair, Urban Serving Universities Coalition
President, University of Cincinnati

Enclosure: Urban Serving Universities Coalition’s Recommendations for Title II