



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

- Arizona State University
- California State University –
13 Member Schools
- Cleveland State University
- Florida International University
- Georgia State University
- Indiana University-Purdue
University Indianapolis
- Morgan State University
- North Carolina State University
- Ohio State University
- Portland State University
- State University of New York –
6 Member Schools
- Temple University
- Tennessee State University
- University of Akron
- University of Central Florida
- University of Cincinnati
- University of Colorado – Denver
- University of Houston
- University of Illinois at Chicago
- University of Louisville
- University of Massachusetts –
Boston
- University of Memphis
- University of Minnesota
- University of Missouri –
Kansas City
- University of New Mexico
- University of New Orleans
- Virginia Commonwealth
University
- Wichita State University

May 7, 2010

The Honorable Tom Harkin
Chairman
HELP Committee
U.S. Senate
428 Senate Dirksen Office Bld.
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Mike Enzi
Ranking Member
HELP Committee
U.S. Senate
428 Senate Dirksen Office Bld.
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Harkin and Ranking Member Enzi:

On behalf of the Urban Serving Universities (USU) Coalition, we are pleased to submit recommendations for the reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA). **In particular, we urge you to establish state and local P-20 councils and strengthen efforts under Title II directed toward urban teachers.**

USU is a network of 45 public urban research universities that represents every region of our country. University presidents created USU to improve urban life and America's competitiveness in the global economy. Our institutions are deeply committed to improving student academic performance and reducing achievement gaps.

USU members are leaders in their local schools and districts and have developed cradle to career partnerships representing K-12 education, higher education, business, non-profit, philanthropic, civic, and faith sectors. In 2009, USU and Living Cities Inc. formed a national partnership to replicate a model P-20 partnership, created by the University of Cincinnati and others in Cincinnati/Northern Kentucky. The model is currently being implemented in Oakland, CA, Indianapolis, IN, Houston, TX and Richmond, VA.

Our institutions are also actively working to promote teacher recruitment, preparation, induction, and retention in high-need urban schools. USU's Urban Educator Corps, a consortium of 17 of our institutions that are working to improve current practices and create virtual curriculum, rubrics and benchmarks on excellence in urban teacher education, and developing databases to track teacher shortages and certification levels. USU members 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 of education who work with urban school leaders.

Authorize State and Local P-20 STEM Councils

USU urges the Committee to incorporate the Alignment of Education Programs in the America COMPETES Act (SEC. 6401 of P.L. 110-6) as part of ESEA reauthorization. The program awards competitive grants to states, to promote, through statewide partnerships, better alignment of elementary and secondary

The Honorable Tom Harkin
The Honorable Mike Enzi
May 7, 2010
Page 2

education with the knowledge and skills needed to succeed in academic credit-bearing coursework in institutions of higher education, in the 21st century workforce and in the Armed Forces. The program also awards competitive grants to support, through a statewide partnership, the establishment or improvement of statewide P-16 educational longitudinal data systems. Statewide partnerships consist of various stakeholders from government entities, early childhood, K-12, higher education, and business.

We appreciate that Congress has recognized the importance of the Alignment of Education Programs in the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA). The alignment and longitudinal database components of this grant program were referenced as requirements of ARRA's State Fiscal Stabilization Fund (SEC. 14005 of P.L. 111-5). Similarly, we are pleased that the Department of Education's Race to the Top grant application is closely tied to P-20 councils. The Department gives priority to applications that address P-20 coordination. Specifically, the Department is interested in receiving applications in which states plan to address how early childhood programs, K-12 schools, postsecondary institutions, and workforce organizations will coordinate to improve all parts of the education system and create a more seamless P-20 route for students. **We encourage Congress to extend these recent Federal efforts to establish statewide P-20 coordination by implementing the Alignment of Education Programs into ESEA reauthorization.**

Local P-20 councils are also of interest to Congress and the Administration. The fiscal year 2010 Omnibus Appropriations bill provides \$10 million for the Department of Education Promise Neighborhoods program. These funds will support one-year planning grants to develop plans for comprehensive neighborhood programs that are designed to combat the effects of poverty and improve education and life outcomes for children, from birth through college. **USU supports the Department of Education's blueprint to include Promise Neighborhoods as part of ESEA reauthorization. We recommend the program be aligned with the statewide Alignment of Education Programs, enabling coordination between local and state councils. USU also encourages the Committee to identify institutions of higher education as required partners in the Promise Neighborhoods grant program, including allowing institutions of higher education to be the lead applicant when appropriate.**

Expand Title II Programs Targeted at Urban Teachers

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 on average experience larger school enrollments and higher pupil to teacher ratios. 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 institutions of higher education 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 HELP Committee moves forward with introducing a bill to reauthorize ESEA, USU recommends “urban institutions of higher education” be added to**

The Honorable Tom Harkin
The Honorable Mike Enzi
May 7, 2010
Page 3

the list of entities that are eligible partners for Title II teacher training and recruiting funds and Math and Science Partnership grants. USU also urges that ESEA reauthorization create a pilot program under Title II, Subpart 5 – National Activities for urban school districts and urban institutions of higher education to implement programs to improve teacher effectiveness specifically in urban schools and communities. Similarly, we recommend establishing a clearinghouse under Title II, Subpart 5 – National Activities to collect, analyze, and disseminate information on improving teacher effectiveness in urban schools and communities.

USU looks forward to working with you on advancing this important 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

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Nancy L. Zimpher". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "N" and "Z".

Nancy L. Zimpher
Chair, Coalition of Urban Serving Universities
Chancellor, State University of New York