

**PRESIDENT'S COMMISSION  
ON  
EXCELLENCE IN SPECIAL EDUCATION  
APRIL 9, 2002 // CORAL GABLES, FL**

**CHARIMAN TERRY BRANSTAD  
OPENING REMARKS**

GOOD MORNING. I AM TERRY BRANSTAD, CHAIRMAN OF THE PRESIDENT'S COMMISSION ON EXCELLENCE IN SPECIAL EDUCATION. I WELCOME YOU TO OUR MEETING. THE FOCUS OF OUR HEARINGS TODAY AND TOMORROW IS PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT IN SPECIAL EDUCATION. BEFORE WE GET STARTED, HOWEVER, I WANT TO BRIEFLY DESCRIBE TO YOU THE MISSION AND ACTIVITIES OF THE COMMISSION.

PRESIDENT BUSH ESTABLISHED THIS COMMISSION LAST OCTOBER TO COLLECT

INFORMATION AND TO STUDY ISSUES RELATED TO FEDERAL, STATE AND LOCAL SPECIAL EDUCATION PROGRAMS. THE COMMISSION'S ULTIMATE GOAL IS TO RECOMMEND POLICIES TO IMPROVE THE EDUCATIONAL PERFORMANCE OF STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES SO THAT NO CHILD WILL BE LEFT BEHIND.

THE "NO CHILD LEFT BEHIND" MESSAGE HAS BECOME A FAMILIAR AND IMPORTANT ONE. IT IS THE GUIDING PRINCIPLE OF THE NEWLY REAUTHORIZED ELEMENTARY AND SECONDARY EDUCATION ACT. NOW, IT COMES INTO PLAY WITH THE WORK OF THIS COMMISSION. WHY? *BECAUSE CHILDREN WITH DISABILITIES ARE AT THE GREATEST RISK OF BEING LEFT BEHIND.*

AT THE OUTSET, I MUST REAFFIRM THAT THE COMMISSION'S WORK IS *NOT* DESIGNED TO REPLACE THE UPCOMING CONGRESSIONAL REAUTHORIZATION OF THE INDIVIDUALS WITH DISABILITIES EDUCATION ACT. RATHER, THE REPORT WE PRODUCE AND ISSUE THIS SUMMER WILL NOT ONLY PROVIDE VITAL INPUT INTO THE REAUTHORIZATION PROCESS, BUT ALSO INTO THE NATIONAL DEBATE ON HOW BEST TO EDUCATE ALL CHILDREN.

TO DATE, THE COMMISSION AND ITS TASK FORCES HAVE HELD HEARINGS IN HOUSTON, DENVER, DES MOINES, AND LOS ANGELES. WE HAVE LOOKED AT ISSUES SUCH AS TEACHER QUALITY, ACCOUNTABILITY, RESEARCH IN SPECIAL EDUCATION, FUNDING, AND COST

EFFECTIVENESS. OUR HEARINGS TODAY AND TOMORROW WILL LOOK AT PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT AND WAYS IN WHICH EDUCATIONAL OPTIONS MIGHT BE EXPANDED FOR CHILDREN WITH DISABILITIES.

CHILDREN OF PARENTS WHO INVOLVE THEMSELVES IN THE EDUCATIONAL PROCESS HAVE MANY ADVANTAGES. RESEARCH SHOWS THAT THESE CHILDREN TEND TO HAVE BETTER GRADES, HIGHER TEST SCORES, AND FEWER BEHAVIORAL PROBLEMS. PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT IS ALSO A VITAL COMPONENT OF SUCCESSFUL SPECIAL EDUCATION PROGRAMS. HOWEVER, THERE IS ONE KEY DIFFERENCE: PARENTS OF SPECIAL EDUCATION STUDENTS HAVE FEWER EDUCATIONAL

OPTIONS SUCH AS CHARTER SCHOOLS,  
PAROCHIAL SCHOOLS, AND SCHOOL CHOICE  
OPTIONS SUCH AS THE MCKAY  
SCHOLARSHIP HERE IN FLORIDA.

THIS IS AN OUTCOME-ORIENTED  
COMMISSION THAT IS EAGER TO HEAR  
FROM YOU. WE NEED YOUR SUGGESTIONS.  
TELL US ABOUT WHAT WORKS. SHOW US  
THE MODELS. WE WILL HAVE A PUBLIC  
COMMENT PERIOD THIS AFTERNOON TO  
ENSURE THAT YOU HAVE A CHANCE TO  
PROVIDE US WITH INPUT. THANK YOU FOR  
YOUR INTEREST IN OUR WORK. WE WILL  
NOW BEGIN TODAY'S HEARING.

(END)