

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

April 1, 2004

The Honorable Ralph Regula
Chairman
House Committee on Appropriations
Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human
Services, and Education
2358 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515-0001

The Honorable David Obey
Ranking Member
House Committee on Appropriations
Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human
Services, and Education
1016 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515-0001

Dear Chairman Regula and Ranking Member Obey:

We request your consideration for the inclusion of \$125 million in the FY2005 House Budget Resolution for the Department of Education to move forward with the school dropout prevention provisions in the No Child Left Behind Act (PL 107-110).

Schools across the country are struggling with our nation's escalating student dropout problem. Lowering the student dropout rate is one of the most significant challenges facing educators today. Students who fail to earn a high school diploma face more obstacles than students who complete high school. According to the National Center for Education Statistics, dropouts are 50 percent more likely to be unemployed than high school graduates. A recent report from the U.S. Census Bureau shows that the average income for full-time workers with a high school degree is approximately 30 percent higher than for a person without a high school degree. In addition, high school dropouts are about three times as likely to slip into poverty from one year to the next when compared to those who have finished high school.

Congress has an obligation to give local school districts the resources needed to create programs that dissuade students from dropping out of school and encourage those who have done so to return to the classroom. The No Child Left Behind Act outlines a two-pronged approach to dropout prevention and re-entry in schools. Subpart 1 provides for the creation of a coordinated national strategy by the Secretary of Education. Subpart 2 creates a National School Dropout Prevention Initiative to give grant assistance to states to establish dropout prevention programs.

While we understand that we are facing a time of budget constraints and an increasing budget deficit, it is not a time to abandon our students who need us the most. We must give our young people every chance to become successful and productive adults. We urge you to include the funding for these programs that Members supported when they voted to pass the No Child Left Behind Act. Thank you for your consideration.

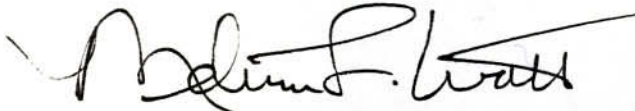
Sincerely,


SHELLEY BERKLEY


BOB ETHERIDGE

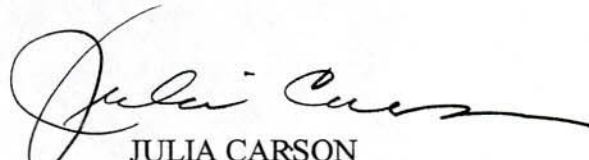

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