

EDUCATION & LABOR COMMITTEE

Congressman George Miller, Chairman

Strengthening America's Middle Class

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Chairman Miller Statement at Committee Hearing On “ESEA Reauthorization: Boosting Quality in the Teaching Profession”

WASHINGTON, D.C. – *Below are the prepared remarks of U.S. Rep. George Miller (D-CA), chairman of the House Education and Labor Committee, for a committee hearing on “ESEA Reauthorization: Boosting Quality in the Teaching Profession”*

Good morning. I'm looking forward to today's hearing because it focuses on one of the most important issues in education today: teacher quality.

We all remember the difference that wonderful teachers have made in our lives and I want to thank our teachers here today for their dedication and commitment to taking on the overwhelming demands of their profession.

We ask teachers to perform miracles every day in our under-funded and overcrowded system. We owe them and their students more than rhetoric; we need to show our commitment to encouraging talented people to enter the field and stay there.

Report after report has shown that the single most important factor in determining a child's success in school is the quality of his or her teacher. Unfortunately, the data is equally clear that low-income and minority students are much less likely than their peers to be taught by well-qualified teachers.

A fundamental goal of No Child Left Behind is to close the achievement gap. One of the very best ways we can close the achievement gap is to close the teacher quality gap. We must ensure that every child, in every classroom, is taught by an outstanding teacher.

No Child Left Behind took an important first step by setting some very basic criteria for determining who is qualified to teach. It requires teachers to be certified, have a Bachelor's degree, and know something about the subject they teach.

The law set a deadline – the 2005-2006 school year – for all states to ensure that their teachers meet this criteria. Unfortunately, no states met the deadline and it has since been extended by a year.

Too many children are still taught by teachers who are not certified or who do not have expertise in the subject they are teaching. This is inexcusable.

Even more troubling is the fact that for too many low-income children the best teachers are often across town and a world away from the students who need them most. For example, nearly three-quarters of math classes in high-poverty middle schools are taught by teachers who lack a major – or even a minor – in math. It is these students who most need the leg up in life that a good education can provide.

We all remember a teacher who made us proud of ourselves for what we accomplished and helped us face our future with hope and confidence. Imagine if every one of our teachers over the years had given us that same strength.

Over the next decade, we will need to hire more than two million new teachers to serve in our public schools. Yet today, we have no national plan for attracting outstanding students into the teaching profession, or keeping them there.

There are many reasons why people decline to enter the teaching profession or decide to leave – low pay, lack of meaningful professional development, lack of respect, unsuitable working conditions, or little opportunity for advancement.

By failing to address this problem, Congress is shortchanging our children and costing taxpayers an estimated \$2.2 billion annually to replace teachers who have left the profession. We need to act immediately to ensure that we have an adequate supply of outstanding teachers for the next generation of students.

This week 43 of my colleagues and I introduced the TEACH Act of 2007 to help increase our supply of excellent teachers and principals. It would double the federal investment in teacher quality so that all children will be taught by high-quality teachers and all teachers will have the supports they need to do their job well.

Among its many provisions, the TEACH Act addresses the teacher shortage crisis in math, science, foreign language, special education and English language instruction through incentives, including upfront tuition assistance and loan forgiveness.

The bill also establishes state-of-the-art induction programs for new teachers so they will have the support they need to succeed. It helps school districts establish career ladders for teachers who expand their knowledge and skills and take on new professional and leadership roles such as mentor or master teacher.

The TEACH Act also ensures children have teachers with expertise in the subjects they teach. It provides financial incentives, including performance pay, to support outstanding teachers and principals who commit to spending four years in the hardest-to-staff schools, with extra incentives for teachers of shortage subjects.

It also enforces NCLB's teacher equity provisions by making ESEA funding contingent on states' compliance with their plans to make sure poor and minority children have equitable access to high-quality teachers.

Finally, the TEACH Act identifies and rewards our best teachers using 21st century data, tools and assessments. This includes holding schools of teacher education accountable for results by requiring states receiving Title II Teacher Quality grants to track the quality and results of the graduates of teacher education programs in the state and makes continued funding contingent on their progress.

Nothing we will do this year on this committee is more important than ensuring that we live up to the promise at the core of No Child Left Behind – the promise of a qualified teacher for *every* child.

We must dedicate the necessary resources, demand the necessary results, and stay with it to the end to make sure every child in America has a teacher we can all be proud of. We must also work to ensure that every teacher in America can say they are proud of us for the support we give them.

I appreciate all each of you are doing to make this a reality and am looking forward to hearing more about what Congress can do to help through the ESEA reauthorization.

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