



American Association of School Administrators

---

July 30, 2008

U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Representative:

The American Association of School Administrators, representing more than 13,000 public school superintendents and local educational leaders, would like to express our support for major provisions of the *Higher Education Opportunity Act* conference report. We urge your support for this important legislation that will improve access to postsecondary opportunities for students, including rural students and improve the training programs for both teachers and school system leaders and their collaboration with the needs of local school districts.

AASA strongly supports the rewrite of *Title II of HEA, Teacher Quality Enhancement*. This entire section has been streamlined to increase the preparedness of teachers for the classroom and therefore, hopefully increase their retention rates. Specifically, AASA supports the work of both the House and the Senate to expand the definition of a high-need local education agency to include not only local school districts with high student poverty but also those districts located in geographically isolated areas. It is rural districts that employ mostly multiple-subject teachers and have the greatest challenges in recruitment, retention and teacher preparation. Hopefully the allowance of partnership grants to focus on the needs unique to rural communities will create new pipelines to steer quality teachers towards the nation's most isolated school districts.

In addition, AASA is encouraged by the inclusion of the *Partnership Grants for Leadership Development*. While it is common knowledge to discuss the impending shortage of teachers across the country, school leadership is expected to face the same void. In the coming year alone, 20 percent of the nation's school superintendents are expected to leave their jobs. Focusing on the training of high quality school system leaders is a critical element to increasing student achievement overall. Once again, in rural areas, school leaders face even greater challenges as they have to fulfill multiple job responsibilities including superintendents who sometimes also serve as teachers and principals.

AASA also supports the inclusion of the *Rural Development Grants for Rural-Serving Colleges and Universities* to increase the rate of rural student enrollment in post-secondary education opportunities. It is often students in the most geographically isolated areas who have the least exposure to the full range of options available to them after high school graduation. Through the use of this grant, secondary students in rural areas will have increased exposure to include both 2 year and 4 year institutions as well as the workforce needs of their surrounding communities.

In closing, we urge you to support final passage of the ***Higher Education Opportunity Act*** conference report. This is an important step forward for the educational opportunities of America's students. If you have any questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Mary Kusler". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, looped "M" and a long, sweeping "K".

Mary Kusler  
Assistant Director, Government Relations