EDUCATION & LABOR COMMITTEE
Congressman George Miller, Chairman

Chairman Miller Statement at Data Quality Campaign Meeting on "Leveraging the Power of Data to Improve Education"

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 the Data Quality Campaign meeting on "Leveraging the Power of Data to Improve Education."*

***

I want to start by thanking the Data Quality Campaign – and all of you in this room who are part of the campaign – for the outstanding work that you've been doing. It is extraordinarily important work and is already making a difference for our kids and for our schools.

Education is the only major enterprise in this country that doesn't operate based on data and we're done with that. Good data is at the core of where we go from here in terms of education reform.

As the recovery plan demonstrated, Congress is very serious about this work and we are committed to helping. I'm thrilled that the recovery included a requirement that Governors assure the Secretary that they will develop data systems with all ten "essential elements" in order to access State Fiscal Stabilization Funds. I'm equally pleased that we provided an additional $250 million federal investment in longitudinal data systems.

This will lay the groundwork for states to benefit from changes Congress anticipates making through the ESEA reauthorization, such as growth models, measuring common graduation rates, and evaluating program and intervention effectiveness.

Inclusion of data systems in the recovery plan is a big deal. The reason we did this is we recognize that it is absolutely critical to have student level information that enables us to understand how to better educate every child – both for their own benefit and for our future as a nation. We cannot afford any longer system that is willing to settle for less.

Congress has stepped up to make this investment a priority, and we will be watching implementation of the data systems very carefully, with an eye on the value of this data when it is done well. It is our hope that states and localities will take a serious and thoughtful approach about how they use this data and build student level information into their decision-making to improve student learning.

I strongly supported inclusion of data systems in the recovery plan because they are integral to the national education reform agenda. Good data can be the driver, and is absolutely indispensable to key reforms moving forward.

Education advocates at all levels – the local, state, and federal level – all need the wealth of information that data systems provide. Congress is preparing to ramp up the ESEA reauthorization process in full partnership with the Obama Administration and, like you, we are focusing on how to improve our schools for all kids.

I've spent the last six years listening to educators and parents around the country share their views on No Child Left Behind. It is clear that we need to make changes to the law so it's a catalyst for positive change in our schools. We must make the law fair, flexible and funded.

One way to improve the fairness of the law is to allow states to use growth models for accountability purposes and 15 states are already doing so. Most - if not all - of the other 35 states are also interested in growth models, and I can't tell you how many Members of Congress want their states to pursue this option. But in order to do so, they need a longitudinal data system.

Another top priority is in stemming the tide of dropouts and reforming our high schools so that every child is prepared to succeed beyond high school, whatever path they pursue. A necessary step in this process is to collect valid, reliable, accurate information on graduation rates. Again, data systems are indispensable.

A third priority is to recruit, retain and reward additional excellent teachers and principals. We can elevate the teaching profession by providing teachers and principals with the supports they need to succeed – career ladders, mentoring for new teachers, and performance pay based on fair and proven models developed with teachers for teachers. Again, data systems can help.

In visiting schools around the country, I've seen great examples of schools using data to identify teachers' strengths in the classroom. Smart principals then revamp professional development accordingly, tasking teachers in mentoring each other in how they can achieve similar success.

 Fourth, we must improve the quality of assessments, reducing our reliance on multiple choice tests. Thanks to the hard work of many of you in this room, there is growing interest in aligning assessments to higher, better, internationally-benchmarked common standards. This is another area where the recovery plan signaled strong interest among both the Obama Administration and Congress.

Finally, as I have been saying for many years now, we must provide the funding that's needed to fulfill the promise of No Child Left Behind. We can't do this on the cheap. And we won't, thanks to the historic investment in education included in the recovery plan, especially the unprecedented increase in funding for Title I and IDEA.

It is great news for the kids of this country that our new President and a Secretary of Education have already shown through some of their very first actions in office that they could not be more serious about making education the priority it should be.

###