

July 20, 2009

The Honorable George Miller
Chairman
Committee on Education and Labor
United States House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable John Kline
Ranking Member
Committee on Education and Labor
United States House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

RE: *Student Aid and Fiscal Responsibility Act of 2009* - H.R. 3221

Dear Chairman Miller and Ranking Member Kline:

On behalf of more than 95,000 local school board members who represent more than 49 million students in the 15,000 public school districts across the nation through our state associations, the National School Boards Association (NSBA) supports your efforts to strengthen and expand the federal investment in school infrastructure and early childhood education through the *Student Aid and Fiscal Responsibility Act of 2009* (H.R. 3221). The legislation would authorize much-needed investments in education that will help our students and schools succeed with 21st Century skills and knowledge.

H.R. 3221 would provide \$5 billion in grants to states and local school districts to help supplement limited resources for school modernization projects that are essential to safe and healthy learning environments. The grants would also support “green” schools programs that will help conserve energy and enhance learning curricula around environmental education in some schools.

The legislation’s provisions for school modernization are also critical to both local and national economies because they will stimulate the creation of more than 100,000 new jobs needed to modernize, renovate and repair many school facilities that are no longer sufficient for today’s educational needs. NSBA recently fielded more than 1,300 responses from school board members regarding priorities for school modernization, which included expansion of preschool and school buildings; classroom additions to accommodate growth/overcrowding; modernization/repairs of roofing, plumbing, electrical wiring, restrooms, maintenance facilities; purchasing and repairing technology facilities/equipment; and, improving building security/safety projects.

The Early Learning Challenge Fund represents a strong start for a national effort to improve the quality of early childhood education programs and provide incentives and resources for states. School board members recognize the critical role that quality early childhood education programs play in helping to set a positive trajectory for student success, and believe strongly in the need for increased federal investment in this area.



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Associate
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The favorable direction of H.R. 3221 can be enhanced by articulating the role that school districts can play in accomplishing the purposes of the bill. School districts already serve as providers of educational services, led by local school boards elected by the community to assure that the needs of every child are met. As providers and evaluators of early childhood education, school districts can continuously serve children from an early age until graduation. The experience of school districts in establishing and implementing standards-based reforms and accountability systems can be invaluable as states develop standards for early learning programs, increase effectiveness of providers, and assess and improve school readiness outcomes for young children.

Further, NSBA supports the priority in H.R. 3221 for awarding grants to states that demonstrate efforts to build public-private partnerships, and urges Congress to strengthen the bill by including local educational agencies:

- As potential partners and early learning service providers.
- In the description of how states will implement a governance structure that aligns early learning and development standards with content standards in grades kindergarten through grade 3.
- In the description of how states will coordinate Title I of the *Elementary and Secondary Education Act* (ESEA).
- As partners for states to develop a rating system for early childhood education providers and assessments of school readiness for children entering kindergarten.

Finally, NSBA urges Congress, the Secretary of Education and the Secretary of Health and Human Services to include representation from education organizations on the National Commission established by H.R. 3221 to review the status of early learning standards, recommend benchmarks and report findings and recommendations.

NSBA greatly appreciates your leadership to increase the federal investment in education and looks forward to working with you as this legislation moves forward. Questions concerning our recommendations may be directed to Lucy Gettman, director of federal programs, at 703.838.6763; or by email, lgettman@nsba.org.

Sincerely,



Michael A. Resnick
Associate Executive Director

MAR: dr/lg/kc
G:Adv/HillLetters/House/07.20.09HR3221LtrtoHouseEdCmte

Cc: Members, House Committee on Education and Labor