May 22, 2014

Honorable Barbara Mikulski  
Chairwoman  
Committee on Appropriations  
United States Senate

Honorable Richard Shelby  
Ranking Member  
Committee on Appropriations  
United States Senate

Honorable Tom Harkin  
Chairman  
Appropriations Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human Services, Education, and Related Agencies  
United States Senate

Honorable Jerry Moran  
Ranking Member  
Appropriations Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human Services, Education, and Related Agencies  
United States Senate

Re: Increasing Equity & Opportunity by Improving Teaching Quality for High Need Students

Dear Chairwoman Mikulski, Senator Shelby, Chairman Harkin, and Senator Moran:

The Coalition for Teaching Quality (CTQ) consists of over 90 national, state, and local organizations committed to the principle that federal policy must ensure that all students have access to teachers and school leaders who enter the profession well-prepared to succeed and who can prove themselves effective once there. Together, we represent a diverse spectrum of civil rights, disability, parent, student, community, educator, and education policy organizations.

We urge you not to consider any further extension of the temporary provision allowing teachers-in-training in teacher preparation programs to be deemed “highly qualified” and treated as if fully prepared for purposes of hiring, equitable distribution, and reporting under the ESEA’s teacher quality provisions. (See Section 144, Pub.L. 113–46; H.R. 2775.) This extension has worked to allow the continued disproportionate representation of underprepared teachers-in-training in our neediest classrooms and flies against the very core of equity.
Along these lines, we note that the data collection and a report from the Secretary of Education that these committees required in September 2012 (see Section 145, Pub.L. 112-175; H. J. Res. 117) calls for the first meaningful national data on the equitable distribution of teachers-in-training who are labeled "highly qualified." This report is long overdue. Due in December 2013, the Department has only recently begun the data collection, meaning, at best, the report will issue nearly a year after Congress' deadline. We request that you reinforce the importance and urgency of the submission of this report in report language accompanying FY 2015 appropriations legislation.

As your committees consider education funding initiatives generally, we urge you to support funding that can strengthen equitable placement of well-prepared and effective teachers. Where teachers lack qualifications or experience or are teaching out-of-field—as per the existing ESEA statutory definition of substandard teacher quality\(^1\)—we urge you to ensure they are not placed disproportionately in low-income schools, rural schools or schools with high proportions of students of color or with high proportions of English learners or students with disabilities\(^2\).

If your committees choose to fund any type of new competitive grant programs in education, we similarly urge you to ensure that any recipients of such funds employ or are primarily working to employ only teachers who are fully prepared, i.e., “profession ready,” on day one in the classroom. We also ask that recipients be held accountable for meeting meaningful benchmarks for providing equitable access to fully-prepared, experienced, and subject matter expert teachers. A primary purpose of any new program must be to attract, support, and retain such teachers in high need schools populated by students with disabilities, low-income, minority and English learner students where these teachers are lacking.

We appreciate your attention to our concerns and urge you to invest in the equitable distribution of fully-prepared and effective teachers for each and every child in accord with these recommendations. We look forward to hearing from your office to discuss this letter further.

Sincerely,

Members of the Coalition for Teaching Quality (listed on next page)
CC: Members, Senate Appropriations Committee

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\(^1\) While there are many opinions about changes that might be useful in measuring teacher effectiveness for purposes of equitable distribution under the ESEA, such a significant policy change should first be addressed to the appropriate policy committees as part of the ESEA reauthorization.

Coalition for Teaching Quality

National Organizations

Alliance for Multilingual Multicultural Education
American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education
American Association of People with Disabilities
American Association of State Colleges and Universities
American Council for School Social Work
American Council on Rural Special Education
American Federation of Teachers
Association of University Centers on Disabilities
ASPIRA Association
Autistic Self Advocacy Network
Autism National Committee
Center for Popular Democracy
Center for Teaching Quality
Citizens for Effective Schools
Communities for Excellent Public Schools
Council for Exceptional Children
Council of Parent Attorneys and Advocates
Disability Policy Collaboration, A Partnership of The Arc and UCP
Disability Rights Education and Defense Fund Inc
Easter Seals
Education Law Center
FairTest, The National Center for Fair & Open Testing
First Focus Campaign for Children
Gamaliel Foundation
Helen Keller National Center
Higher Education Consortium for Special Education
Hispanic Association of Colleges and Universities
Latino Elected and Appointed Officials
National Taskforce on Education
Lawyers’ Committee for Civil Rights Under Law
League of United Latin American Citizens
Learning Disabilities Association of America
Movement Strategy Center
National Alliance of Black School Educators
National Association of Councils on Developmental Disabilities
National Association of Elementary School Principals
National Association of School Psychologists
National Association of Secondary School Principals
National Association of State Directors of Special Education
National Board for Professional Teaching Standards
National Consortium on Deaf-Blindness
National Council for Educating Black Children
National Council of Teachers of English
National Council of Teachers of Mathematics
National Disability Rights Network
National Down Syndrome Congress
National Down Syndrome Society
National Education Association
National Latino Education Research & Policy Project
National Opportunity to Learn Campaign
National Urban League
Opportunity Action
Parents Across America
Progressive States Action
Public Advocates Inc.
Public Advocacy for Kids
Rural School and Community Trust
School Social Work Association of America
SEDL
South East Asia Resource Action Center
TASH - Equity, Opportunity, and Inclusion for People with Disabilities
Teacher Education Division of the Council for Exceptional Children
TESOL International Association
United Church of Christ Justice & Witness Ministries
State and Local Organizations

Abbott Leadership Institute – Newark, New Jersey
Action Now – Illinois
Action Now– North Carolina
ACTION United
Alliance for Quality Education (AQE)
Alliance of Californians for Community Empowerment (ACCE)
Arkansas Community Organizations
Bay Area Parent Leadership Action Network
Brighton Park Neighborhood Council – Chicago
California Association for Bilingual Education
Californians for Justice
Californians Together
California Latino School Boards Association
Campaign for Quality Education
Center for the Future of Teaching and Learning Coalition for Educational Justice
Citizen Action of New York
Delawareans for Social and Economic Justice
Educate Our State
Education Voters Pennsylvania
Grow Your Own Illinois
Inner City Struggle
Justice Matters
Legal Advocates for Children and Youth
Montgomery County Education Forum
Parent-U-Turn
Parents for Unity
RYSE Center
Texas Association of Chicanos in Higher Education
Young Voices-Providence, Rhode Island
Youth On Board – Somerville, Massachusetts
Youth Together