

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

March 29, 2012

The Honorable Tom Harkin
Chairman, Subcommittee on Labor,
Health and Human Services, and Education
Senate Appropriations Committee

The Honorable Richard Shelby
Ranking Member, Subcommittee on Labor
Health and Human Services, and Education
Senate Appropriations Committee

Dear Chairman Harkin and Ranking Member Shelby:

We support a continued commitment to the nation's gifted and talented children. There is abundant evidence that the nation's high-ability students are not keeping pace academically with their peers across the world. In a global economy that depends on the availability of skilled and knowledgeable workers, our failure to develop the potential of high-ability students will have serious long term repercussions for our economy and our national competitiveness.

Too often, advanced ability goes unrecognized, especially for children from economically disadvantaged backgrounds. As a result, many of these bright students fail to maximize their academic and intellectual potential, and their performance on state tests and other benchmarks has languished. Indeed, there has been an increasing "excellence gap" between the performance of top students from minority and low-income backgrounds compared to their more advantaged peers. At current rates of achievement, it will take decades to close some of these gaps.

Gifted and talented students have unique learning needs that require specialized instruction. They need to be stimulated and challenged and their intellectual talent must be developed through rigorous curriculum delivered by teachers trained to identify and support talent.

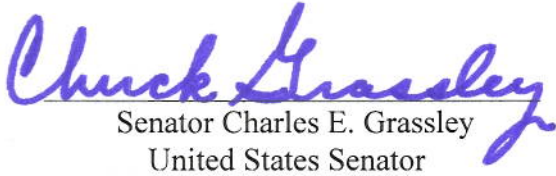
In order for teachers to be able to recognize and develop the gifts and talents of the high ability learners in their classrooms, they must first be provided with the tools to identify and meet these students' unique learning needs. There is a tremendous need for further research in this area.


As such, we continue to support the Jacob Javits Gifted and Talented Students Education Act. If restoring funding for this program in the Fiscal Year 2013 Labor, HHS, and Education Appropriations Bill is not possible, we urge the subcommittee to at least provide the following legislative language directing the Institute for Education Sciences to continue the research and development activities that had been funded under the Javits Act specifically aimed at meeting the learning needs of disadvantaged and underrepresented gifted and talented students:


Within the funds made available under this heading, the IES shall support research and development that directly supports learning and improves the academic achievement of gifted and talented students, including those who may not be formally identified as gifted and those who are from underrepresented populations; ensure dissemination of the results of all such research supported by federal funds; continue support for a National Research Center on the Gifted and Talented ; and ensure that gifted and talented education is included in national reports produced by IES.

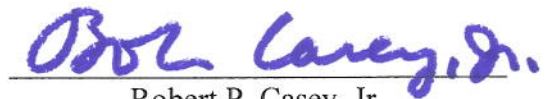
Thank you for your consideration of our request. If you have any questions, please contact James Rice in Senator Grassley's office at 4-3744, Meg Benner in Senator Blumenthal's office at 4-2823, Rachel Sotsky in Senator Lieberman's office at 4-4815 or Christina Baumgardner in Senator Casey's office at 4-6324.

Sincerely,


Senator Charles E. Grassley
United States Senator


Richard Blumenthal
United States Senator


Joseph Lieberman
United States Senator


Robert P. Casey, Jr.
United States Senator


Barbara Mikulski
United States Senator