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STATE OF IDAHO
STATE SUPERINTENDENT OF PUBLIC INSTRUCTION
Mr. Tom Luna

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June 21, 2011

US Secretary Arne Duncan
Department of Education
400 Maryland Avenue SW
Washington DC 20202

Dear Honorable Secretary:

When Congress and President George W. Bush passed No Child Left Behind a decade ago, it provided a positive direction for education in the United States and in Idaho. The law moved us to a standards-based education system where schools are now accountable for every child and accountability is measured by results. No Child Left Behind has put forth the ambitious goal for every child in America to be on grade level by 2014. But now, 10 years later, the law has become a stumbling block to continued improvement in raising student achievement.

The reauthorization of No Child Left Behind is overdue by more than four years. There can only be two reasons for this inaction: either Congress doesn't have the political will, or it simply isn't a priority of the Administration. Neither reason is acceptable, nor is it the fault of individual states. This inability of Congress and the Administration has left states in a parallel universe, where we are being forced to try and reconcile an inefficient, outdated law with bold, innovative paths toward raising student achievement. We can no longer financially afford to do both. Since Congress and the Administration are not going to act immediately, states will take the lead.

Education has changed in the last 10 years, and so must the law. Idaho has taken its own path to a 21st century education model. Our state's impressive education reforms include: a statewide teacher evaluation model tied to student achievement, a statewide growth model to identify and reward schools for a job well done, a statewide pay-for-performance plan, phasing out tenure in favor of two year contracts, a statewide math initiative, a middle school credit system, adoption of Common Core State Standards and a governing state in the SMARTER Balanced Assessment Consortium.

Our student achievement data is equally impressive. During the last four years, Idaho has been a national leader in the increase in the number of schools making Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP). In 2007, just 26 percent of Idaho schools made AYP; now, more than 60 percent have achieved this goal. This increase occurred while our state continued to raise the targets for proficiency. Idaho has not kept its academic targets artificially low. In 2010, our targets were 85 percent proficiency in reading and 83 percent for math, some of the highest in the nation. Our results on the National Assessment of

Educational Progress echo our gains on statewide standardized tests. It is clear our students have been making progress, but the current federal law has taken Idaho and other states as far as it can. Therefore, it must be updated and reauthorized now.

When No Child Left Behind was authorized in 2001, the law used an accountability system based on proficiency because that is all we had available. Today, we have the ability to measure academic growth. A growth model is more accurate and can better identify which schools are successful and which are truly in need of improvement. We have been waiting for a federal accountability model based on growth, but we cannot wait any longer.

In Idaho, we have agreed to the Council of Chief State School Officers' *Roadmap on Next-Generation State Accountability Systems* and will begin working toward these principles this year. In 2011, the State of Idaho will not lift its proficiency targets for Adequate Yearly Progress. Instead, the state will keep its current proficiency targets in place and begin implementing a new model of accountability. Idaho, like many other states, does not have the luxury of spending time and limited resources on meeting the rigid requirements of an outdated accountability system while we transition to a new one that we all know works better for students. Therefore, our time and resources will focus on the new accountability system, an accountability system that is based on academic growth and is aligned with the CCSSO Principles for Next-Generation State Accountability Systems.

This is the future of education in the 21st Century. If Congress and the Administration will not act, states like Idaho will. We would appreciate your support in this effort.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Tom Luna", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Tom Luna
Superintendent of Public Instruction

cc: Governor C.L. "Butch" Otter
Senator Mike Crapo
Senator Jim Risch
Congressman Mike Simpson
Congressman Raul Labrador