

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

May 25, 2011

The Honorable Arne Duncan
Secretary of Education
U.S. Department of Education
400 Maryland Avenue, SW
Washington, D.C. 20202

Dear Secretary Duncan,

We write to express our support for the Supplemental Education Services Program (SES) within Title I of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA), a program specifically intended to narrow the achievement gap between low-income minority students and their higher income peers.

While we applaud your efforts to advance reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, we are concerned that the administration may be considering taking away much needed services from low-income families by “waiving” key provisions of the law. Weakening the law’s requirements for free tutoring for the children who need it most will not only undermine Congress’ authority but will also have a disproportionately adverse impact on minority students.

Data gathered by the Government Accountability Office suggests that the vast majority of the 650,000 students currently benefitting from SES are minorities. Many of our own constituents have used SES programs and many remain on waiting lists trying to access these much needed services.

Additionally, the effect of an SES waiver is particularly disconcerting considering the many hurdles already facing students who may benefit from the program. According to studies presented at the 2008 meeting of the American Education Research Association, only seven states notify parents of their children’s eligibility in time for enrollment in September. Additionally, delays in program access, confusing enrollment processes, lack of transparency, and insufficient parental notification may result in artificially low participation rates despite high need and high interest.

Given our shared goal of ensuring that all students have an equal opportunity at educational success, we respectfully urge you to consider these issues as well the impact a waiver of the SES requirement could have on thousands of our nation’s students.

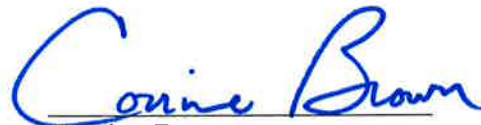
We look forward to working with you to reauthorize ESEA and to expand and improve quality educational services so that all students can reach their fullest academic potential. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,


Alcee L. Hastings
Member of Congress

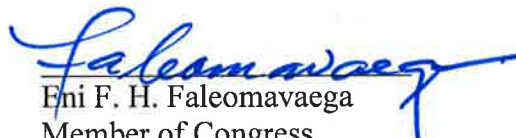

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Member of Congress



Robert E. Andrews
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Corrine Brown
Member of Congress

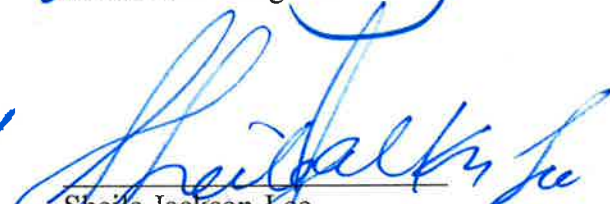

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