



THE SECRETARY OF EDUCATION  
WASHINGTON, DC 20202

September 10, 2013

Honorable John Thune  
United States Senate  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Thune:

Thank you for your July 16, 2013, letter requesting information on the U.S. Department of Education's (Department) efforts to disseminate information on the Affordable Care Act (ACA). I am sending a similar response to the other signatories.

As you know, the ACA is intended, in part, to make preventive care more accessible and affordable for millions of uninsured Americans. As you also know, over the years, there has been a greater focus on the relationship between health care, particularly preventive care, and education, so that healthy students at all ages are ready to learn and can focus on their academic studies. To that end, the Department's Office of Safe and Healthy Students funds programs committed to improving student health, well-being, and achievement in a variety of ways.

Recognizing the intersection of wellness and student achievement, the Department is coordinating with the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) to share information with our stakeholders about the ACA. This is consistent with the Department's long-standing practice of sharing helpful health information from the Federal government with its stakeholders.

For example, during the 2010 outbreak of Influenza A (H1N1), the Department shared resources from flu.gov with stakeholders to help curb the spread of illness. In earlier Administrations, there were efforts by the Department to work with HHS in disseminating important information about the Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP) in the 1990s and providing useful information about a possible pandemic flu epidemic in 2008. The Department also participates with HHS in the First Lady's "Let's Move" initiative focused on reducing childhood obesity and in other activities to support healthier students.

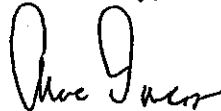
It is my strong belief that, in addition to increasing the wellness of our citizens, the ACA will help to improve educational outcomes for our nation's students. Researchers and policy makers generally agree that there is a connection between health and student performance. For instance, we know that students with health or nutrition problems who are struggling to see the blackboard, or suffering from malnutrition, are less likely to be successful academically than their healthier peers. In fact, a 2010 report in the Equity Matters research review series, entitled "Healthier Students Are Better Learners: A Missing Link in School Reforms to Close the Achievement Gap," presents evidence from a wide range of fields – neuroscience, child

development, epidemiology, and public health – of the relationship between health problems and poor academic outcomes.

Our efforts to disseminate information on the ACA have included sharing basic materials developed by HHS for our stakeholders to use at their discretion; HHS does not provide funds to the Department for these efforts. The Department has devoted a very minimal amount of staff time and resources for these efforts, and thus expenses related to these efforts are a very minimal part of the salaries and expenses section of the budget. I can also assure you that no single Department employee works exclusively on this effort. Thus, our minimal efforts to provide our stakeholders with information about the ACA are related to the important mission of the Department. Moreover, by leveraging Federal resources, the Federal government is able to provide important information to the public in a more efficient and cost-effective manner. We consider this a good government approach that will help students of all ages achieve in their educational activities.

I appreciate your interest in this important matter. If you have any additional questions, please direct your staff to the Deputy Assistant Secretary of the Office of Legislation and Congressional Affairs, Lloyd Horwich, at (202) 401-0020.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Arne Duncan". The signature is stylized and cursive.

Arne Duncan