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March 23, 2010

The Honorable George Miller
Chairman
Committee on Education and Labor
U.S. House of Representatives
2181 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable John Kline
Ranking Member
Committee on Education and Labor
U. S. House of Representatives
2101 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Miller and Ranking Member Kline:

I am writing on behalf of the American Association of State Colleges and Universities (AASCU), a presidential association representing over 400 public colleges and universities located in 49 states, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, Guam and the Virgin Islands. As you prepare to reauthorize the Elementary and Secondary Education Act this year, I encourage you to engage public colleges and universities in developing a comprehensive proposal that supports strengthening the teacher workforce and improving student achievement. I will focus my comments on three areas: teacher education, college- and career-ready standards, and accountability. Common to these three areas of focus are the importance of partnerships between institutions of higher education and other education entities at the state and local levels.

Teacher Education. Central to AASCU's public policy agenda is supporting strong university-based teacher education programs, anchored in clinical practice and research-based pedagogy. We understand that developing college students into quality teachers requires a strong program, grounded in disciplinary knowledge and research and with significant experiences in K-12 classrooms. Higher education continues to be in a unique and unparalleled position to deliver effective teacher preparation, bringing together the expertise of the arts and sciences and research-based pedagogy to ensure highly effective K-12 teachers. New teachers will fill hundreds of thousands of new teaching positions in the coming years, and the nation faces potentially serious teacher shortages in high-needs schools and in subject areas like science and math, that are vital to the future competitiveness of our students and economy. For this reason, it is imperative that any ESEA reauthorization proposal seeks to build capacity in the nation's public schools of education, which produce almost 85 percent of the teaching workforce.

AASCU recommends that ESEA reauthorization legislation is used as a vehicle to reauthorize Title II of the Higher Education Act, specifically, the Teacher Quality Partnership (TQP) grant program. We oppose the consolidation of this program in the President's proposed budget for fiscal year 2011. The Teacher Quality Partnership program is the only federally funded program that higher education is eligible to apply for to create innovative and effective teacher preparation programs. AASCU recommends that this program remain open to institutions

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of higher education. Further, AASCU strongly recommends that the set-aside for higher education in Title II of ESEA be increased to 5 percent in order to meet the critical need for high quality effective teachers.

College- and Career-Ready Standards. AASCU supports the Administration's priority to raise academic standards so that all students, regardless of their zip code or income level, graduate from high school prepared to succeed in postsecondary education and the workforce. Approximately 30 percent of today's college students require non-credit remedial coursework, draining the financial and human capital resources on college campuses. To support this movement towards rigorous standards, AASCU institutions are prepared to integrate strategies for teaching common standards into teacher preparation programs. Further, AASCU recommends that institutions of higher education play a role in the development of new assessments, aligned to the new standards adopted by states.

The Administration's *Blueprint* proposes that, in states that do not adopt a common set of academic standards, public institutions of higher education certify any new standards as sufficient for bypassing remedial education. AASCU institutions welcome the opportunity to work in partnership with states in this effort.

Accountability. AASCU fully supports the creation of state longitudinal data systems, which allow for data-driven decision-making and increased accountability. In this age of accountability, teacher preparation programs must be able to document their effectiveness in preparing teachers who can produce learning gains in their students. For eight years, AASCU has been recognizing innovative teacher preparation programs that exemplify superior K-12 learning outcomes and act as models for other institutions of higher education through the Christa McAuliffe Award.

Meaningful partnerships between higher education and local and state education agencies can create the conditions for strengthening both school districts and schools of education. Universities and schools of education should be utilized as hubs of innovation and research, supporting the development of curriculum, assessments, and professional learning opportunities for in-service educators in local districts. These partnerships also have the potential to strengthen teacher preparation programs, as colleges of education use K-12 classrooms as rich hands-on resources for the next generation of teachers.

Thank you in advance for considering these recommendations. I look forward to working with you in the months to come.

Sincerely,



Muriel A. Howard
President