

Council of the Great City Schools®

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Council of the
Great City Schools®

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December 11, 2017

The Honorable Virginia Foxx
Chairwoman
Education and Workforce Committee
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington D.C. 20515

The Honorable Bobby Scott
Ranking Member
Education and Workforce Committee
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington D.C. 20515

Dear Chairwoman Foxx and Representative Scott:

The Council of the Great City Schools, the coalition of the nation's largest central city school districts, writes to provide our initial perspective on the higher education reauthorization bill pending before the Committee. The Council has some concerns with the bill in its current form, which we hope will be addressed during the legislative process.

High-poverty school districts, including the nation's Great City Schools, experience major challenges in recruiting and retaining teachers and other professional staff due to resource limitations, including salary levels that generally cannot compete with surrounding school districts. The federal programs offering college loan forgiveness provide a useful incentive to teachers and other staff to undertake challenging jobs in high-poverty school districts. Preliminary data from a number of our large urban districts indicate that as many as 3 to 4 percent of our professional staff apply for federal student loan forgiveness each year based on completing the five or ten-year employment-tenure requirements in a high-poverty school. The Council views these modest federal loan programs as important tools to overcome teacher shortages and recruitment and retention gaps in high-poverty schools.

Additionally, the Council supports maintaining the current financial structure of the Pell Grant program. The Council is concerned that any additional responsibilities added to the program might further encumber the discretionary funds allotted under the appropriations subcommittee's allocation limitations.

The Council requests that the Committee consider modifications that address these concerns as the PROSPER Act moves through the legislative process. Thank you.

Sincerely,

Michael Casserly
Executive Director