



American Association of School Administrators

---

July 17, 2009

Committee on Education and Labor  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Chairman Miller and members of the Committee:

On behalf of the American Association of School Administrators (AASA), representing more than 13,000 school superintendents and local educational leaders, we offer our support for major portions of **HR 3221, the Student Aid and Fiscal Responsibility Act of 2009**. Specifically we applaud the inclusion of Title III and Title IV which focus on the critical need to improve the environments that America's students are learning in and the importance of preparing children ages zero to five to be school ready.

There is a growing need around the country to deal with aging school structures and the growing demands on public school facilities. Despite Congressional efforts to provide funding for school districts to meet modernization and renovation needs under the State Fiscal Stabilization Fund within the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act, few of those dollars will go toward school construction. Most states are supplanting their effort in education leaving districts with no additional funding. This bill goes a long way furthering the conversation around the state of public school facilities and the importance of the learning environment to improve student achievement through \$5 billion in grants to states and local school districts. We appreciate that this bill will flow from the states to local school districts via formula grant and that districts will be guaranteed a \$5,000 minimum grant.

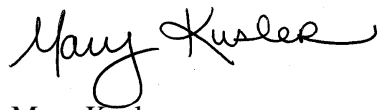
While we were pleased to see the money go out via formula, we are still concerned that the formula is based on Title I allocations. Under the current Title I formula, dollars are distributed to concentrations of poverty. This is defined by numbers or percentages, whichever is higher. Unfortunately, this often results in larger lower poverty school districts getting more Title I money per child than higher poverty smaller school districts. Many times, smaller and/ or rural schools do not get their share. While this is probably the best option currently available, we strongly urge the committee to make the necessary corrections in the Title I formula in the reauthorization of ESEA to ensure that the necessary federal investment is going to schools and districts where the percent of poverty is the greatest.

In addition, we applaud the inclusion of the Early Childhood Challenge Grants. Our membership believes that we can have a great impact on student achievement, especially for high poverty students, if we give them access to high quality early childhood programming. AASA's 2009 Legislative Agenda states that "*AASA believes the federal government has a responsibility to help prepare children for success in school in their first five years of life by addressing an array of social factors that have been shown to affect student achievement. These factors include, but are not limited to, poverty, health care, early education and childcare.*" We applaud the emphasis on high poverty students within the bill and also the comprehensive nature of the services allowed under the state supported early childhood programs.

We would like to offer our suggestion to increase the coordination with K-12 educators, including requiring the development of early childhood standards that are aligned with the state K-12 standards and are developed with involvement of representatives of local school districts. While there is a lot of mention of coordinating with federal laws that impact local school districts there seems to be a lack of direct required involvement of K-12 educators. When early childhood systems are developed without coordination of the local school districts, there is often a lack of seamless transition when it comes to school readiness.

Once again, thank you for your efforts to provide guaranteed support to school districts efforts in school construction, renovation and repair and to increase the number of high poverty students attending high quality early childhood programming in **HR 3221, the Student Aid and Fiscal Responsibility Act of 2009**. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact us.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Mary Kusler". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, looped "M" and a long, sweeping underline.

Mary Kusler  
Assistant Director, Advocacy & Policy