

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

The Honorable Hilda L. Solis
Secretary
Department of Labor
200 Constitution Ave., NW
Washington, D.C. 20210

The Honorable Kathleen Sebelius
Secretary
Department of Health and Human Services
200 Independence Avenue, SW
Washington, D.C. 20201

Commissioner Michael J. Astrue
Social Security Administration
6401 Security Boulevard
Gwynn Oak, MD 21207

Dear Secretary Duncan, Secretary Solis, Secretary Sebelius, and Commissioner Astrue:

According to a recent U.S. Government Accountability Office (GAO) report examining current transition services for students with disabilities¹, in 2011, there were approximately 2.2 million students with disabilities eligible for programs providing transition services. Unfortunately, these students face multiple barriers to accessing federally-funded programs that are intended to help them as they graduate from high school and enter postsecondary education or the workforce. I understand that your agencies have convened an interagency working group, referred to as the Federal Partners in Transition Workgroup, that is looking at how best to improve the postsecondary and workforce transition services for students with disabilities. I am hopeful that your combined efforts and improved coordination will result in better outcomes for these students.

The GAO report identifies some of the barriers students with disabilities face, including: difficulty navigating multiple programs that are not always coordinated; possible delays in service as they wait to be served by adult programs; limited access to transition services; a lack of adequate information or awareness on the part of parents, students, and service providers of available transition program options after high school; and a lack of preparedness for postsecondary education or employment. To address these barriers and improve outcomes for students, I respectfully request that your four agencies work together through the existing Federal Partners in Transition Workgroup to clearly identify the distinct roles, responsibilities, programs and initiatives of each agency. In its report, GAO states that enhanced collaboration between the appropriate program offices could “improve the provision of transition services to students with disabilities.” Accordingly, I request that the Workgroup report to my office the following:

- How each agency will share pertinent data across programs and a plan for that data-sharing;
- How each agency will develop compatible outcome goals for transition service programs and a plan to develop those outcome goals;

¹ Government Accountability Office, *Students with Disabilities: Better Federal Coordination Could Lessen Challenges in the Transition from High School*, GAO-12-594 (July 2012).

- How each agency will develop and use a single system for the assessment of the effectiveness transition service programs within each agency, and the impact of transition services at the local level and a plan to implement such a system; and
- Any statutory or regulatory barriers to effectively implementing transition services.

I know that helping students with disabilities transition from high school to postsecondary education or the workforce is a shared priority and I look forward to working closely with you to improve services for students. If you, or your staff, have any questions, please contact Kara Marchione on the Committee on Education and the Workforce staff, at 202-226-9407, or Michael Gamel-McCormick on the Committee on Health, Education, Labor and Pensions staff, at 202-224-7692. Thank you in advance for your timely consideration.

Sincerely,

George Miller
Senior Democrat
Committee on Education and the Workforce

Tom Harkin
Chairman
Committee on Health, Education, Labor and Pensions