

June 7, 2006

BY FACSIMILE

To: Members of the House Appropriations Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human Services, Education and Related Agencies

Re: FY 2007 Labor/HHS/Education Appropriations Bills

On behalf of the *Tapping America's Potential* (TAP) coalition, we urge you and your colleagues to fully fund effective Science, Technology, Engineering and Math (STEM) programs at the Department of Education as part of the Fiscal Year (FY) 2007 Labor/HHS/Education Appropriations Bills.

The United States is facing a critical talent gap in science, technology, engineering and math, and is not keeping pace with foreign competition. The demographic trends are sobering: baby boomer retirements will deplete the science and engineering workforce by 50 percent, compounded by a one-third drop in the number of U.S. students interested in pursuing engineering degrees. If America is to remain the world's primary source of innovation, we must develop the U.S. talent pipeline necessary for a highly skilled workforce. This is not only about producing more scientists and engineers; all students must have a strong foundation in math and science to succeed in the rapidly changing global economy.

Increasing the U.S. talent pipeline will require national leadership plus the combined efforts of public and private sector leaders-working with educators, parents and students-focused on two of the critical needs articulated in our coalition's TAP report:

- Upgrading K-12 math and science teaching to foster higher student achievement; and
- Motivating U.S. students and adults to study and enter science, technology, engineering and mathematics careers.

We congratulate Members of Congress for bipartisan accomplishments earlier this year: creating financial incentives for Pell-eligible students to take rigorous core courses in high school and to pursue STEM majors in college, significant loan forgiveness for STEM majors who become math and science teachers, and the McMorris/Holt Amendment approved by the House to enable the use of funds to train Advanced Placement/International Baccalaureate teachers.

Recognizing current fiscal constraints, at a minimum the United States also needs strategic STEM education investments starting in FY 2007 to:

- **Fully fund the education components in the President's American Competitiveness Initiative:**

MathNow (\$250M) to improve K-8 curricula and ensure middle school students are prepared to master algebra;

Advanced Placement/International Baccalaureate incentives and teacher training (\$90M) to increase the number of high school students who pursue and succeed in rigorous math and science courses; and

Adjunct Teacher Corps (\$25M) to enable math and science professionals to help address the shortage of teachers with knowledge in these fields.

- **Strengthen and fund the Department of Education's Math/Science Partnerships** at least at the current level (\$184M), with priority to partnerships that focus on proven strategies to develop/update current teachers' content knowledge in teaching mathematics and science.

These represent investments in teachers and students currently in our classrooms. In addition we urgently need to improve the future teacher corps. If possible this year, we encourage Congress to go beyond this minimum to fund at least one additional initiative at the Department of Education that is included in the National Academies' *Rising Above the Gathering Storm* report- competitive grants to colleges and universities for STEM degree programs with teacher certification.

The member companies of the business organizations that comprise the TAP coalition employ millions of Americans, fuel job creation and economic growth, and depend on a skilled science and engineering workforce to generate tomorrow's innovations. Each year these companies devote hundreds of millions of dollars of their earnings and countless employee volunteer hours to improve achievement, inspire students, support teachers and increase education opportunities. A few representative examples of what companies are doing on STEM education are described at www.tap2015.org/about/business_comm.html.

The TAP coalition understands the tremendous challenges you face setting funding priorities in a severely tight budgetary situation. However, these focused investments in STEM education programs are critical to continued U.S. innovation leadership. We urge that the final version of the FY 2007 Labor/HHS/Education Bill reflect these priorities, and we look forward to working with you to further advance this public-private sector effort.

If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact Susan Traiman at 202-496-3267.

Sincerely,

The *Tapping America's Potential* (TAP) Coalition