



*Working with and
Through our State
Associations, NSBA
Advocates for Equity
and Excellence in
Public Education
through School
Board Leadership*

April 14, 2011

Member
United States House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

RE: H.R. 1473, Full-Year Continuing Appropriations Act for Fiscal Year 2011

Dear Representative:

On behalf of the 95,000 local school board members and 50 million public school students represented by the National School Boards Association (NSBA), I am writing regarding the consolidated appropriations bill for the remainder of Fiscal Year 2011.

NSBA acknowledges the negotiations to finalize funding for FY2011, as well as efforts to mitigate cuts to key education programs including grants to states under the *Individuals With Disabilities Education Act* (IDEA) and Title I grants for disadvantaged students. The proposed agreement in H.R. 1473 would also strengthen investments in early childhood education and continue programs for school improvement.

Unfortunately, H.R. 1473 would reauthorize and fund the District of Columbia Opportunity Scholarship Program, of which NSBA strongly opposes. Now is not the time to divert funding from public schools, which are increasingly held accountable for student achievement. It should be noted that as higher standards are the goal of public schools, private schools are not held to the same standards and accountability. More support for public schools is needed as educators and policymakers look to raise academic standards, teacher and principal effectiveness and graduation rates to ensure our students are competitive in the 21st Century global economy. Our public schools must also respond to increasing demands for services for special education and English language learners who generally do not meet the admissions standards of private schools. Whether it is in Washington, D.C. or elsewhere in the country, vouchers drain funds from public schools where the majority of American children attend, to pay for private school tuition for a few. In addition, the U.S. Department of Education's evaluation of the program revealed no significant differences in reading or math achievement between voucher students and Washington, D.C. public school students.

Additionally, this legislation would impose cuts to other programs, as most of the nation's school districts continue to face economic uncertainty with state budget shortfalls, declines in local revenues, and a greater demand for services. For example, the bill eliminates education technology grants and reduces Career & Technical Education funding at a time when resources for college and career readiness and STEM subjects are a high priority.

Office of Advocacy

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NSBA acknowledges Congress' efforts to pass a final FY2011 appropriations bill with key investments in education, but strongly opposes the continuance of the District of Columbia Opportunity Scholarship Program. While amendments to H.R. 1473 may not be permitted during today's vote, NSBA urges that you reconsider future funding increases to programs that are competitively funded when cuts are imposed on key programs, such as Title I, that benefit far more students.

According to the National Commission on Fiscal Responsibility and Reform, "...we must invest in education, infrastructure, and high-value research and development to help our economy grow, keep us globally competitive, and make it easier for businesses to create jobs."

Questions regarding our concerns may be directed to Deborah Rigsby, director of federal legislation at 703-838-6208; or by e-mail at driigsby@nsba.org.

Sincerely,



Michael A. Resnick
Associate Executive Director