



May 23, 2011

The Honorable Arne Duncan
U.S. Department of Education
400 Maryland Avenue, SW
Washington, DC 20202

Dear Secretary Duncan:

Sixteen member organizations of the Learning First Alliance (LFA) represent more than 10 million public education professionals, parents and community and state leaders who work continuously to ensure that all students receive the world class education they deserve.

LFA members strongly support efforts in Congress to reauthorize the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) – which is now more than three years overdue – and move a bill that addresses the widely-recognized flaws in current law. Further, we have individually and collectively advocated for improving ESEA in a way that supports educators, student learning, and local public school reform while relieving districts and states from what are widely acknowledged as unfair, counterproductive, and overly burdensome regulations.

We recognize that the intent of the existing ESEA regulations is to ensure that all students are held to high achievement standards and there is accountability for every student's success. In support of this, we all share a commitment to ensuring that standards of excellence are adopted and implemented in every public school district in the nation. However, the reality is that school districts across the nation struggle with the rigidity of some of those regulations and are forced to focus on compliance rather than teaching and learning. In order for local districts to concentrate on student needs, scarce resources must be focused on those needs and not unnecessary regulatory compliance, often counterproductive sanctions, and reporting that do little to contribute to student success.

Absent swift reauthorization of ESEA, LFA member organizations urge the Department of Education to explore its authority for offering regulatory relief around NCLB. Once those areas are identified, we would recommend that the department then engage in collaborative discussions with our individual member organizations - as well as other interested stakeholders, including Congress – and focus on building consensus around proposals offering appropriate and immediate regulatory relief for the upcoming 2011-12 school year.

American Association of Colleges for
Teacher Education

American Association of School
Administrators

American Association of School
Personnel Administrators

American Federation of Teachers

American School Counselor
Association

Association of School Business
Officials International

International Society for Technology in
Education

Learning Forward

National Association of Elementary
School Principals

National Association of Secondary
School Principals

National Association of State Boards
of Education

National Education Association

National Middle School Association

National PTA

National School Boards Association

National School Public Relations
Association

Phi Delta Kappa International

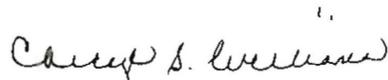
Learning First Alliance
4455 Connecticut Avenue, NW
Suite 310, Washington, DC 20008
Telephone: (202) 296-5220
Facsimile: (202) 872-4050
www.learningfirst.org

LFA organizations and the members they represent are dedicated to providing a high-quality public education for every student they serve. This request for immediate consideration of regulatory relief in the existing ESEA is predicated on our desire to use the limited resources available for public education in ways focused most directly on ensuring the highest level of student learning and achievement.

We appreciate your leadership on this issue, and we look forward to working with you and staff at the Department of Education to facilitate discussions to jointly identify specific regulatory actions aimed at helping all students reach academic success in their schools.

We look forward to working with you on this important endeavor. Please do not hesitate to contact us if you have any questions.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Cheryl S. Williams".

Cheryl S. Williams
Executive Director

On behalf of:

- American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education
- American Association of School Administrators
- American Association of School Personnel Administrators
- Association of School Business Officials International
- American School Counselor Association
- International Society for Technology in Education
- Learning Forward
- National Association of Elementary School Principals
- National Association of State Boards of Education
- National Association of Secondary School Principals
- National Education Association
- National Middle School Association
- National School Boards Association
- National School Public Relations Association
- Phi Delta Kappa, International
- National Parent Teacher Association