

August 14, 2008

The Honorable George Miller  
Chairman  
Committee on Education and Labor  
U. S. House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Howard "Buck" McKeon  
Ranking Member  
Committee on Education and Labor  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Edward Kennedy  
Chairman  
Committee on Health, Education, Labor and Pensions  
U.S. Senate  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Michael Enzi  
Ranking Member  
Committee on Health, Education, Labor and Pensions  
U.S. Senate  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairmen Miller and Kennedy and Ranking Members McKeon and Enzi:

As the Executive Director of Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages, Inc. (TESOL), a global education association representing more than English language educators worldwide, I am writing in appreciation of all the time and effort you and your colleagues invested in the successful passage of H.R. 4137, the Higher Education Opportunity Act. This large and important piece of legislation, which reauthorizes the Higher Education Act (HEA), provides numerous positive outcomes and options for students, families, and educators and also strengthens postsecondary institutions and opportunities.

Since the introduction of both the House and Senate HEA reauthorization bills (HR 4137/S. 1642), TESOL has supported many of the bills' goals, particularly their shared emphasis on providing wider access to higher education and stronger support for teacher preparation – especially for diverse populations including English language learners. The compromise bill, and its revisions of Title II—the portion of the bill that addresses teacher preparation programs—recognize teacher quality as an essential component in producing student achievement as well as the need to respond to the identified teacher shortages found in local communities and states. TESOL strongly supports rigorous

standards for the preparation of all teachers and recognition of the fact that specialized training is necessary for diverse populations including English language learners.

TESOL also applauds the inclusion of a new program found in Title II to establish graduate fellowships to prepare individuals to become university faculty who will then prepare highly qualified teachers in high-need areas including bilingual education and English as a second language. The United States has seen a dramatic increase of English language learners in public schools over the past decade, now estimated to be over 5 million. There is a critical shortage of ESL and bilingual educators in the U.S., and this has a direct impact upon schools working to meet adequate yearly progress (AYP) as mandated by the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001. The Higher Education Opportunity Act recognizes this tenuous situation for the first time, and will help build the nation's capacity to provide highly qualified teachers for its increasingly multilingual and multicultural classrooms.

Lastly, TESOL is very supportive of the newly authorized program under the Fund for Improvement of Postsecondary Education that provides assistance for partnerships between colleges and secondary schools that enroll late entering English language learners. These students are often overlooked in secondary school classrooms and graduate unprepared for postsecondary study and the workplace. Incentives for programs to serve these students will help our nation in its ongoing efforts to improve our 21<sup>st</sup> century workforce.

TESOL congratulates the work of both the Senate Health, Education, Labor and Pensions Committee and the House Education and Labor Committee on the passage of the Higher Education Opportunity Act. TESOL looks forward to working with you and the U.S. Department of Education on its implementation, and welcomes the opportunity to be a resource to you on future education policy issues.

Thank you again.

Sincerely,



Charles S. Amorosino, Jr.  
Executive Director

CC: Shelley Wong, President  
Mark Algren, President Elect  
Sandy Briggs, Past President