FORUM ON EDUCATIONAL ACCOUNTABILITY

March 26, 2007

The Honorable Edward M. Kennedy, Chair Health, Education, Labor and Pensions Committee United States Senate 835 Hart Office Building Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Kennedy:

The Working Group of the Forum on Educational Accountability, who are signers of the Joint Organizational Statement on *No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act*, October 21, 2004, representing over 115 national education, faith-based, civil rights, and other organizations, urge your consideration of the following recommendations in your final deliberations as you prepare to reauthorize the *Higher Education Act of 1965*, S 1614.

Specifically, under Section 202 of the current law, State Grants, we recommend the inclusion of the following changes in legislative language:

1. Strategies for teaching higher-order skills

At the end of Sec. 202(d)(1)(B)(ii), strike "and" and, after Sec. 202(d)(1)(B)(iii), insert "and" followed by a new subsection (iv), that reads: "(iv) enable pre-service teachers to effectively teach higher-order analytical, evaluative, problem-solving and communications skills appropriate for the teacher's content or specialty area;"

Rationale: The federal role should be to leverage its limited resources in a manner that would result in greater efforts on the parts of States to ensure increased coverage of not only problem-solving and communications skills but also higher-order analytical and evaluative skills as well. It will be essential for students to have higher level skills in the workplace, for higher education and in life.

2. Enhanced clinical programs

In Sec. 202(d)(1)(D), replace "lasting not less than 1 term" with "lasting not less than 2 terms, through integration of education theory and methods coursework into closely supervised clinical practice...."

Rationale: Research now indicates that to be effective, clinical programs must be extended beyond 1 term to as much as 3 terms. We recognize the significant impact with the expansion, but we also recognize that many teacher preparation colleges are moving toward longer clinical programs. Therefore, we recommend increasing the minimal time for clinical programs to be at least two terms. This requirement should be placed on new students so as not to impose new requirements on students currently enrolled in such programs.

Further, research indicates that teacher education programs that are successful in preparing teachers who effectively teach diverse students are ones that closely integrate their theory and methods

coursework into extensive clinical experience. Such integration of coursework with clinical practice needs to become the norm.

3. Alternative route to certification requirements

In Sec. 202(d)(2)(D), after "which may include the development of a State test for such areas," replace the period with a comma, insert the word "and", and add a new subsection (E) as follows: "(E) all alternative routes to certification programs are high quality, include substantial mentoring, supervision, and clinical experience, and are successfully completed before teachers are considered "highly qualified" within the meaning of section 1119 of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965."

In Section 202(d)(2), please add a new subsection (F) as follows: "All teacher candidates shall be assessed by the State and have their academic content knowledge and teaching skills considered "highly qualified" within the meaning of section 1119 of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965, whether they come from traditional or alternative route programs.""

<u>Rationale</u>: Many school officials are concerned that alternative certification programs are viewed as short-cuts to qualification when they should be viewed as an optional process to acquire certification through alternative experiences having similar value.

Comparable changes in teacher preparation to those recommended for Section 202, State Grants, above, should likewise be made in the parallel Section 203 of the current law, Partnership Grants. Specifically, we recommend the inclusion of the following legislative language for Partnership Grants:

1. Strategies for teaching higher-order skills

At the end of Sec. 203(e)(1)(B)(iii), insert a new subsection (iv) as follows: "(iv) enable pre-service teachers to effectively teach higher-order analytical, evaluative, problem-solving and communications skills appropriate for the teacher's content or specialty area;" and renumber the current subsection "iv" as subsection "v".

<u>Rationale</u>: The federal role should be to leverage its limited resources in a manner that would result in greater efforts on the parts of States to ensure increased coverage of not only problem-solving and communications skills but also higher-order analytical and evaluative skills as well.

2. Enhanced clinical programs

In Sec. 203(e)(1)(D), replace "lasting not less than 1 term" with "lasting not less than 2 terms, through integration of theory and methods coursework into closely supervised clinical practice,...."

Rationale: Research now indicates that to be effective, clinical programs must be extended beyond 1 term to as much as 3 terms. We recognize the significant impact with the expansion, but we also recognize that many teacher preparation colleges are moving toward longer clinical programs. Therefore, we recommend increasing the minimal time for clinical programs to be at least two terms. This requirement should be placed on new students so as not to impose new requirements on students currently enrolled in such programs.

Further, research indicates that teacher education programs that are successful in preparing teachers who effectively teach diverse students are ones that closely integrate their theory and methods coursework into extensive clinical experience. Such integration of coursework with clinical practice needs to become the norm.

We very much appreciate your interest in improving the quality of education for all children. Questions related to our recommendations should be directed to Reginald M. Felton, director of federal relations, National School Boards Association, at 703-838-6782.

Sincerely,

Reginald M. Felton