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## United States Senate

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January 16, 2007

The Honorable Edward Kennedy  
Chairman  
Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor and Pensions  
615 Senate Hart Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Chairman Kennedy,

As the reauthorization of No Child left Behind (NCLB) approaches, I would like to take the opportunity to share with you the results of a survey of Colorado educators my office recently completed. Their collective wisdom and advice is a useful tool when evaluating the past performance and future of NCLB. I thank you for your leadership and commitment to improving the quality of education for our nation's youth, and I look forward to working with you as the reauthorization of NCLB approaches.

I share your commitment to ensuring that NCLB provides high performing teachers with career advancement opportunities and professional development. In this matter, the accomplishments of the Denver Public Schools (DPS) are particularly instructive in the treatment of high performing teachers under NCLB. DPS recently implemented a pay-for-performance program to reward teachers for strong instruction and workforce leadership. In designing the program, DPS worked closely with the Colorado Education Association to ensure that the program advances teacher effectiveness and meets the needs of Denver school children. As HELP reauthorizes NCLB, the committee would be well served by looking to DPS's program as an innovative model. If you or your staff would like any further information on DPS, please let me know.

Other priorities for Colorado under NCLB include an increase in federal support for low-income schools. In Colorado, there is a wide achievement gap between different groups of students. On average, 31 percent more students from middle and high income families achieve a proficient score on Colorado's standardized assessment test (CSAP), than do low income students. One course of reform that should be considered includes greater utilization of educational laboratories. These laboratories could be used to assist in providing increased technical support to identify areas of improvement and help school districts implement specific solutions.

In addition, the facilitation of parent and community involvement in public school education is equally important. As a parent who was involved in my daughters' schools,

I am keenly aware that education does not simply occur during the school day, it occurs at home and in our communities. I am pleased to hear that parent and community involvement will also be a focus when NCLB is reauthorized.

As I mentioned previously, my office conducted an extraordinarily successful survey of Colorado educators. My office received over 2000 responses. Though I am enclosing a copy of the survey findings, the following highlights are of particular interest to me.

- Colorado educators struggle to provide quality education at the current public education funding levels. Many Colorado teachers devote personal resources to teach their students. Similarly, Colorado school administrators say they use local and state funding to meet NCLB requirements. I believe we must commit more Federal resources to our educators and school districts to meet the requirements of NCLB.
- Colorado educators do not believe that the goal for all American students to be proficient by 2013-2014 will be achieved. However, the inability to meet this goal does not signify a general failure of schools. This goal is very lofty, and incremental goals may be easier to achieve.
- Many Colorado educators favor measuring individual student achievement, rather than group achievement, as is currently included in NCLB. Colorado educators believe that individual assessments enable schools and teachers to target specific students for more help. The Department of Education has moved forward on a pilot program on individual-growth models. Such a model would be a viable option for states across the country, including Colorado.
- An emphasis on testing has overshadowed other programs and subjects that enrich education, such as history, civics, and art. Our youth deserve a well-rounded education. NCLB should not detract from other educational subjects.
- Colorado Educators said the low-achievement levels of specific groups of students are part of the reason their schools fail to meet NCLB requirements. Colorado educators do not lay the blame on these groups of students, but rather point out that they need more resources to provide at-risk students with better programs.
- Colorado's rural educators expressed concern with NCLB's Highly Qualified Teacher requirements for rural teachers. Rural schools in Colorado struggle to hire and adequately pay qualified teachers. In addition, rural teachers teach more than one subject, which makes becoming highly qualified more expensive for rural educators. In the 109<sup>th</sup> Congress, I introduced the Rural Teacher Retention Act (S. 1036) to help rural districts recruit and retain teachers by providing hiring and retention bonuses to rural teachers. I will reintroduce a similar proposal in the next few weeks, and I would welcome

the opportunity to discuss how the legislation can be included in the reauthorization of the NCLB Act.

I hope you will consider the findings of this survey during the reauthorization process of NCLB. In addition, I hope to actively work with you and HELP as the consideration of this vital legislation moves forward. Thank you again for your leadership and for your work towards improving the education of all children.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Ken Salazar". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Ken Salazar  
United States Senator