

Hispanic Education Coalition

December 13, 2005

Dear Member of Congress:

On behalf of the Hispanic Education Coalition (HEC), an *ad hoc* coalition of national organizations dedicated to improving educational opportunities for the more than 40 million Hispanics living in the United States, we urge you to oppose the conference report to the fiscal year (FY) 2006 Departments of Labor, Health and Human Services, and Education appropriations legislation (H.R. 3010). This conference report fails to adequately fund programs critical to the Hispanic community and the nation as a whole, and it represents a major step backwards for Hispanic education.

Latino children account for a significant and rapidly growing segment of our nation's student population. If these students are not provided with adequate academic opportunities, America's public school system will not be truly effective. The conference report to H.R. 3010 ignores this reality and sets our nation's public schools up for failure.

During floor consideration of H.R. 3010, the Senate agreed to increase funding for critically important Hispanic education programs such as High School Dropout Prevention, Migrant Education, English Language Acquisition, and Hispanic-Serving postsecondary institutions by a total of \$35 million. Unfortunately, this conference report reneges on this promise and places millions of Hispanic children at serious risk of academic failure. Further, H.R. 3010 virtually eliminates Even Start, a critically important early childhood education program for the Hispanic community.

While Congress has a responsibility to balance the nation's budget, it must not do so on the backs of this nation's most vulnerable students. Congressional supporters of the conference report and the budget resolution will have a difficult time explaining to the Hispanic community how cutting these critical education programs while reducing taxes for high-income individuals is an appropriate manner of achieving a balanced budget. Congressional approval of the conference report will send a clear message that Congress has misplaced its priorities and has no serious intention to strengthen the public schools or adequately serve Hispanic interests.

The House of Representatives voted down a previous version of this legislation because it does not meet our national needs. The current conference report continues to inadequately fund education programs. Thus, passage of this conference report to H.R. 3010 would be disastrous for Latino students, and the HEC strongly urges you to vote NO on final passage. Please note that all votes associated with this legislation may be recommended for inclusion in the National Hispanic Leadership Agenda scorecard.

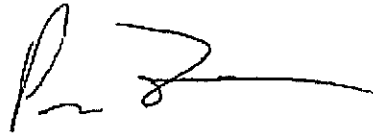


Thank you for considering the Hispanic Education Coalition's position in this matter. Please contact Miriam Calderon at 202-776-1767 or mcalderson@nclr.org or Peter Zamora at 202-293-2828 or pzamora@maldef.org with any questions or concerns.

Sincerely,



Miriam Calderon
HEC Co-Chair
National Council of La Raza



Peter Zamora
HEC Co-Chair
Mexican American Legal Defense and Educational Fund

On behalf of:

American Federation of Teachers (AFT)
High School Equivalency / College Assistance Migrant Program (HEP/CAMP)
Hispanic Association of Colleges and Universities (HACU)
Intercultural Development Research Associates (IDRA)
League of United Latin American Citizens (LULAC)
Migrant Legal Action Program (MLAP)
National Association of State Directors of Migrant Education (NASDME)
National Association of Bilingual Education (NABE)
National Council for Community and Education Partnerships (NCCEP)
National Education Association (NEA)
National Migrant and Seasonal Head Start Association (NMSHSA)