

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510-1804

July 27, 2010

The Honorable Tom Harkin
Chairman
Senate Appropriations Committee
Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human
Services, Education, and Related Agencies
Senate Dirksen Office Building, Room 131
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Thad Cochran
Ranking Member
Senate Appropriations Committee
Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human
Services, Education, and Related Agencies
Senate Dirksen Office Building, Room 156
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Harkin and Ranking Member Cochran:

Thank you for your past support for the highly-successful Teach For America program. Teach For America's work in New Orleans, rural Louisiana, and the 33 other regions across the country has a demonstrable impact on the lives of nearly half a million low-income children every day.

I appreciate that the Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human Services, Education, and Related Agencies (LHHS) funded Teach For America at \$22 million. However, to extend the program's reach into more schools and communities, it is my hope is that we can work together to provide \$50 million – or as close as possible to that amount – for Teach For America in the LHHS Appropriations bill this year when it is considered by the full Senate Appropriations Committee.

There is broad bi-partisan support for Teach For America in the U.S. Senate. In April, I joined Senators Lamar Alexander (R-Tenn.) and Kay Bailey Hutchison (R-Texas) on a letter urging the LHHS Subcommittee to include \$50 million in its FY 2011 LHHS bill. In fact, over a quarter of my colleagues in the Senate have gone on the record supporting the \$50 million request. This includes members of the LHHS Subcommittee, such as Senators Richard Durbin (D-Ill.), Herb Kohl (D-Wis.), Jack Reed (D-R.I.), and Arlen Specter (D-Penn.).

The reason is clear: Teach For America is a federally authorized program with an emphasis on results-oriented work. Rigorous independent studies from research institutions such as Mathematica Policy Research, Inc. and the Urban Institute demonstrate that Teach For America corps members are more effective than other new teachers in their schools; and according to Teach For America's 2009 Alumni Social Impact Report, the organization is building an unparalleled pipeline of leadership for education reform in low-income communities.

With a record number of young people wanting to teach in low-income communities, Teach For America can double in size with the appropriate level of federal funding. In fact, according to Teach For America's internal 2010 admissions database, more than 5% of the senior class at more than 120 colleges and universities applied to Teach For America in 2010. With sufficient funding, Teach For America would be able to provide jobs for closer to 6,000 qualified individuals, as compared to the 4,500 corps members it was able to accept this year. That would be a 33 percent increase in program

participation next year alone.

A \$50 million appropriation for Teach For America would be a significant down payment on making the program truly national in scope. This funding would start Teach For America on a trajectory to double in size over the next five years, with nearly 17,000 teachers nationwide reaching over one million underserved students in nearly all 50 states by 2016. Furthermore, at that level, Teach For America would grow its alumni base to more than 52,000, creating a powerful leadership force at the local level to push for aggressive and bold education reform.

In a time when Congress must reign in discretionary spending, Teach For America is a fiscally sound investment. Every federal dollar invested in Teach For America leverages \$6 in private, state, or local funds. In addition, Education Secretary Arne Duncan said in his budget request that if the Elementary and Secondary Education Act was not enacted, he had eight funding priorities this year: one of which was a brand-new \$50 million, 100% federally funded teacher recruitment program. Right now, with only 13% of its funding coming from the federal government, Teach For America is recruiting a huge surplus of our nation's brightest young leaders, but having to turn many qualified applicants away due to a lack of funding. Teach For America can support the Obama Administration's education goals through an already established, primarily privately funded program with a demonstrated record of success. I urge you to provide those funds to Teach For America.

Thank you for your leadership and your consideration of this request. If you have any questions, please contact Tasha Patusky on my staff at (202) 224-3532.

Sincerely,



Mary L. Landrieu
United States Senator

MLL/tbp