

Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

August 27, 2009

The Honorable Arne Duncan, Secretary
U.S. Department of Education
400 Maryland Avenue, SW
Washington, D.C. 20202

Dear Secretary Duncan,

We are writing about efforts in the *Fostering Connections to Success and Increasing Adoptions Act* (P.L. 110-351) designed to improve the educational outcomes of youth in foster care. Within this new law are key provisions that address education stability and continuity for children in foster care, an issue we all care about deeply. Among other provisions, the law requires child welfare agencies to document efforts to ensure children remain in the same schools even when their living situations change; and when remaining in the same school is not in their best interest, students are to be immediately enrolled in a new school. Importantly, the law requires child welfare agencies to coordinate with local education agencies when making these efforts and assurances.

We are writing to request that the U.S. Department of Education assist in the implementation of these important new education provisions of the *Fostering Connections* law. Without the coordinated efforts of education agencies, child welfare agencies will not be able to fully implement the new requirements of this law and better serve this vulnerable population of young people.

Accordingly, we urge your office to send a clear message to local education agencies: Make it priority to work with child welfare agencies to promote school stability and continuity for children in foster care. LEAs must know about the new requirements in *Fostering Connections* as well as receive guidance on how best to implement these requirements in their school districts.

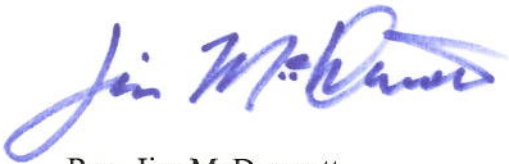
We request that the Department of Education work collaboratively with the Administration on Children and Families and the Children's Bureau of the Department of Health and Human Services to address the critical education needs of children in foster care, including by:

- Collaboratively addressing the education provisions of *Fostering Connections* in guidance from both agencies that is consistent and cohesive;
- Meeting regularly and coordinating efforts to ensure the intent of the Act is being achieved and addressing other issues that impact the education needs of children in care;

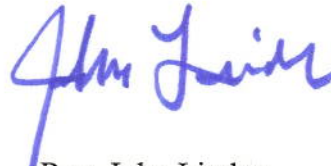
- Identifying key points of contact throughout the Department of Education with the specific responsibility to address how agency regulations, policies and procedures impact children in foster care;
- Supporting the field through necessary training and technical assistance to ensure cross agency collaboration continues to effectively address the needs of our youth; and
- Finding ways to support and highlight promising, evidence based practices that are emerging from the field.

Federal collaboration between the U.S. Departments of Education and Health and Human Services and other appropriate agencies can serve as a model for communities and states trying to coordinate efforts, including whom to involve in these efforts, what issues to confront, and what resources to access to support positive outcomes. An important issue to emphasize and highlight with state and a local education agencies is the need to collect and report education outcomes for children in foster care. To do so requires collaboration with the local and state child welfare agencies, and focused attention to confidentiality laws and the real privacy concerns of students and their families. Federal level support is critical to encourage this pivotal data collection effort.

Sincerely,



Rep. Jim McDermott
Chairman
Subcommittee on Income Security
and Family Support



Rep. John Linder
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Income Security
and Family Support