



STATE OF CONNECTICUT
STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION



July 30, 2010

The Honorable Christopher J. Dodd
United States Senator
448 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Dodd,

I'm writing to offer my thanks and deep appreciation for the support you gave Connecticut's Phase II Race to the Top application. It was very disappointing to come up short again, particularly after all the work that went into building our second application. We invested thousands of hours into rewriting and rethinking our proposal, engaged hundreds of people in the work, and left no stone unturned to secure the commitments of all communities throughout the state.

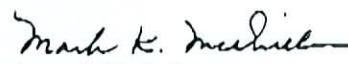
Connecticut is much stronger as a result of this collaboration, but at a price: We have a clearer sense of purpose and have enacted several critical pieces of legislation (e.g., PA 10-111) that have the potential to do much good for our students over time. But I have to agree with concerns expressed by Representative DeLauro and others that Race to the Top and the assumptions underlying this form of competition may be far more damaging than the short-term, positive effects Secretary Duncan is touting. With Race to the Top, we are now making winning and losing an acceptable strategy for solving the problems of poor children.

I hope when the reauthorization of ESEA is entertained that you will strongly consider the negative implications underlying the President's new "Blueprint" where, again, competitive grants will be a critical component of pushing additional education reforms from Washington D.C. We now have a country divided into states that are Race to the Top winners and losers, all on the argument that the competition is an effective way to spark innovation and change. As one state that is not in the winners' circle, but with issues of urban poverty that will rival any state's, it's hard for me to see how advantaging some and not all is in best interest of unity and commonality of purpose.

Connecticut's approach has been pragmatic and inclusive. We did not promise what we couldn't deliver. In this process we brought many interests together to establish a clear vision for taking the appropriate next steps for our state. Unfortunately, Race to the Top fails to recognize these values.

I look forward to talking more with you in the months ahead, and thank you again for your support, understanding and advocacy for all students in our state.

Sincerely yours,


Mark K. McQuillan
Commissioner of Education

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