

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

May 23, 2008

The Honorable Margaret Spellings
Secretary of Education
U.S. Department of Education
400 Maryland Avenue, SW
Washington, DC 20202

Dear Secretary Spellings:

We write to you, in accordance with all applicable laws and regulations, in support of Florida's proposal for the Department of Education's differentiated accountability pilot program introduced earlier this year. We believe this program will prove to be an effective tool for improving educational quality and ensuring the academic success of all Florida students.

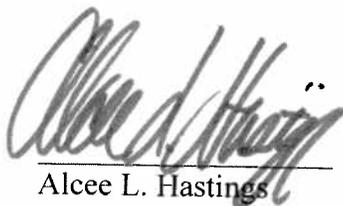
As you may know, there are nearly 450 Florida schools expected to implement restructuring sanctions, as required by No Child Left Behind, in the upcoming school year. While all of these schools warrant significant attention and support, the degree of intervention necessary varies considerably. Florida's inclusion in the differentiated accountability pilot program would allow the State to intensely target schools needing the most comprehensive reforms while providing more adequate, specialized assistance to schools that have performed relatively well but face remaining challenges.

Sixty-nine percent of Florida's Title 1 schools were identified as "schools in need of improvement" for the 2007-08 school year. The differentiated accountability pilot program would provide much needed assistance and the flexibility necessary to bring all of Florida's schools into compliance with AYP and bring all of Florida's students to grade-level proficiency.

Florida's proposal is particularly valuable, because in addition to the flexibility afforded to the state, it also links state and national standards, resulting in a comprehensive, complimentary set of classifications. By combining Florida's grading system with national AYP measures, Florida's proposal creates a model that is easily understandable by the general public, clearing up any confusion parents and students may have regarding the currently parallel systems of accountability.

Thank you for introducing this valuable program and for your consideration of Florida's proposal. We look forward to working with you as Congress continues its efforts to improve educational achievement for students in Florida and across the nation.

Sincerely,



Alcee L. Hastings
Member of Congress

Bill Nelson
U.S. Senator

Mel Martinez
U.S. Senator

Gus M. Bilirakis
Member of Congress

Allen Boyd
Member of Congress



Corrine Brown
Member of Congress

Ginny Brown-Waite
Member of Congress

Vern Buchanan
Member of Congress

Kathy Castor
Member of Congress

Ander Crenshaw
Member of Congress

Lincoln Diaz-Balart
Member of Congress

Mario Diaz-Balart
Member of Congress

Tom Feeney
Member of Congress

Ric Keller
Member of Congress

Ron Klein
Member of Congress

Connie Mack
Member of Congress

Tim Mahoney
Member of Congress

Kendrick B. Meek
Member of Congress

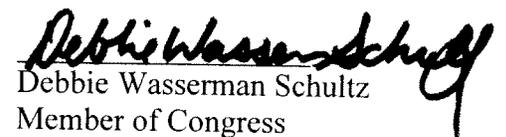
John L. Mica
Member of Congress

Jeff Miller
Member of Congress

Adam H. Putnam
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Ileana Ros-Lehtinen
Member of Congress

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Member of Congress



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