

September 12, 2013

The Honorable Barbara Mikulski
Chairwoman
Committee on Appropriations
United States Senate

The Honorable Richard Shelby
Ranking Member
Committee on Appropriations
United States Senate

The Honorable Tom Harkin
Chairman
Appropriations Subcommittee on Labor,
Health and Human Services, Education, and
and Related Agencies
United States Senate

The Honorable Jerry Moran
Ranking Member
Appropriations Subcommittee on Labor,
Health and Human Services, Education,
Related Agencies
United States Senate

Dear Chairwoman Mikulski, Senator Shelby, Chairman Harkin, and Senator Moran:

The Coalition for Teaching Quality—comprised of over 90 civil rights, disability, parent, community, and education organizations—is committed to ensuring that every student in every classroom in America has access to fully-prepared and effective teachers. For that reason, we oppose extending the highly qualified teacher (HQT) provision (Section 163 of H.R. 3082 P.L. 111-242), which was enacted in December 2010. This provision allows participants who have not yet completed teacher preparation programs or who are in alternative teacher preparation programs to be classified as “highly qualified” even though they are still in training.

During the FY 13 appropriations process the provision was extended once again through the 2014-2015 school year despite the opposition of over 90 organizations. This extension included a requirement for the U.S. Secretary of Education to submit a report to Congress by December 31, 2013 on the distribution of teachers participating in alternative route to certification programs, which has yet to be acted upon. While we look forward to receiving this report, the Coalition strongly opposes any further extension of the HQT provision as it will perpetuate the harmful practice of allowing teachers with little-to-no training to be recognized as “highly qualified.” Extending this provision in any FY 14 appropriations bill will also undermine the work being done by Congress to reauthorize the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA), which is the proper place for the HQT issue to be considered, not the appropriations process.

Research shows that such teachers are disproportionately concentrated in schools and classrooms filled with our most vulnerable students. Under the current provision, teachers-in-training can continue to teach for as long as three years even if they never complete their preparation program, pass certification tests, or meet other state certification standards. And worse yet, parents are never notified that their children’s teachers are still in training and therefore not actually “highly qualified” according to the original definition of the term.

Every student, especially students from low-income homes, minority students who attend low-performing schools, students with disabilities and English Learners, deserves teachers who are fully prepared on day one. Federal policy must further this goal, not undermine it by permitting the current definition of “highly qualified” to have no basic standard for the teacher of record.

Far from destroying alternative teacher preparation programs or creating an unworkable situation in our nation’s schools, allowing the current HQT amendment to sunset after the 2013-2014 school year will give policymakers another opportunity to restore parents' and policymakers' ability to identify and monitor the inequitable distribution of teachers-in-training. Where legitimate shortages exist teachers-in-training in alternate route programs will still be able to be hired over even less well-prepared substitute or emergency permitted teachers.

We urge you to allow this provision to expire and not include it as an anomaly in any FY14 appropriations bill.

Sincerely,

Members of the Coalition for Teaching Quality
(listed on next page)

CC: Members, Senate Appropriations Committee

Coalition for Teaching Quality (92 Organizations)

National Organizations

Alliance for Multilingual Multicultural Education	Latino Elected and Appointed Officials
American Council on Education	National Taskforce on Education
American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education	Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights Under Law
American Association of People with Disabilities	Leadership for the Common Good
American Association of State Colleges and Universities	League of United Latin American Citizens
American Council for School Social Work	Learning Disabilities Association of America
American Council on Rural Special Education	Movement Strategy Center
Association of University Centers on Disabilities	NAACP Legal Defense and Educational Fund, Inc.
ASPIRA Association	National Alliance of Black School Educators
Autistic Self Advocacy Network	National Association of Elementary School Principals
Autism National Committee	National Association of Secondary School Principals
Center for Teaching Quality	National Association of State Directors of Special Education
Citizens for Effective Schools	National Center for Learning Disabilities
Coalition for Community Schools	National Consortium on Deaf-Blindness
Communities for Excellent Public Schools	National Council for Educating Black Children
Council for Exceptional Children	National Council of Teachers of English
Council of Parent Attorneys and Advocates	National Council of Teachers of Mathematics
Disability Policy Collaboration, A Partnership of The Arc and UCP	National Disability Rights Network
Disability Rights Education and Defense Fund Inc	National Down Syndrome Congress
Easter Seals	National Down Syndrome Society
Education Law Center	National Education Association
FairTest, The National Center for Fair & Open Testing	National Indian Education Association
First Focus Campaign for Children	National Latino Education Research & Policy Project
Gamaliel Foundation	National Opportunity to Learn Campaign
Helen Keller National Center	National PTA
Higher Education Consortium for Special Education	Opportunity Action
	Parents Across America
	Partnership for 21 st Century Skills
	Public Advocates Inc.
	Public Advocacy for Kids

Rural School and Community Trust
School Social Work Association of America
SEDL
South East Asia Resource Action Center
TASH - Equity, Opportunity, and Inclusion
for People with Disabilities
Teacher Education Division of the Council
for Exceptional Children
TESOL International Association
United Church of Christ Justice & Witness
Ministries

State and Local Organizations

Abbott Leadership Institute – Newark, New Jersey
Action Now – Illinois
Action Now– North Carolina
ACTION United
Alliance of Californians for Community Empowerment (ACCE)
Arkansas Community Organizations
Bay Area Parent Leadership Action Network
Brighton Park Neighborhood Council – Chicago
California Association for Bilingual Education
Californians for Justice
Californians Together
California Latino School Boards Association
Campaign for Quality Education
Center for the Future of Teaching and Learning Coalition for Educational Justice
Delawareans for Social and Economic Justice
Educate Our State
Education Voters Pennsylvania
Grow Your Own Illinois
Inner City Struggle
Justice Matters
Legal Advocates for Children and Youth
Montgomery County Education Forum
Parent-U-Turn
Parents for Unity
RYSE Center
Texas Association of Chicanos in Higher Education
Young Voices-Providence, Rhode Island
Youth On Board – Somerville, Massachusetts
Youth Together