

February 3, 2005

Dear Senator/Representative:

We are writing to share with you the attached statement from more than forty national education, civil rights, disability, children's, religious, and citizens' organizations. In order to achieve the No Child Left Behind Act's goals of strong academic progress for all children and closing the achievement gap, Congress needs to make substantial corrections in the law. Since this statement was first issued in October 2004, the number of organizations joining this statement has more than doubled. We hope that you give serious consideration to these recommendations for constructive changes, starting this year.

In addition, we urge you not to extend the NCLB mandated annual math and reading tests to two additional high school grades. While we welcome the President's focus on improving student achievement in high schools, two more years of testing will not accomplish this important goal but could instead lead to narrowing curriculum and increasing the number of students who drop-out. Instead, the federal government should put in place programs such as those that help high schools strengthen the curriculum for all students, create comprehensive adolescent literacy programs, establish smaller schools and programs within existing schools to provide more individualized attention to students, expand drop-out prevention activities, and create more flexible high schools that meet the needs of our diverse population of high school students.

We urge that you hold hearings to explore these concerns and that legislation putting in place these reforms be acted on this Congress, rather than waiting until the scheduled expiration of NCLB in 2007.

For additional information, please contact:

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