May 15, 2009

The Honorable Tom Harkin
Chairman, Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human Services, and Education
Senate Appropriations Committee
131 Dirksen Senate Office Building

The Honorable Thad Cochran
Ranking Member, Subcommittee on Labor
Health and Human Services, and Education
Senate Appropriations Committee
156 Dirksen Senate Office Building

Dear Chairman Harkin and Ranking Member Cochran:

We support a renewed funding commitment for the Jacob Javits Gifted and Talented Students Education Act in fiscal year 2010. If the United States is to remain competitive globally, we must challenge our best and brightest students to reach their full potential. Therefore, it is vitally important to reinvigorate and expand the only federal program currently dedicated to increasing our knowledge about, and ability to meet, the unique learning needs of gifted and talented students. Despite the importance of education and advanced learning to global competitiveness, the Jacob Javits Gifted and Talented Students Education program has been chronically under funded at levels too low to fully achieve the nationwide goal of improving gifted education in America. In fact, it has even faced cuts in recent years.

We believe that it’s time our nation invests in the kind of advanced learning necessary for our future prosperity. As a start, we ask that you provide at least $11.25 million for the Javits program in fiscal year 2010. This would restore Javits to its pre-2003 level, before a series of across-the-board cuts eroded the program’s reach.

The availability and quality of gifted and talented services for students varies widely between states and school districts, especially at this time of fiscal uncertainty when many programs are in danger of elimination. This establishes a real need for federal support, especially in the areas of research and dissemination of best practices. Although relatively small, the Javits Act positively impacts the education of gifted and talented students in every state through the National Research Center on the Gifted and Talented and through competitive research and capacity-building grants. Most importantly, the Act focuses on disadvantaged gifted students who often go unnoticed in school and are not being challenged. Recent national reports have shown that there is an increasing achievement gap for this population of students at the same time as we’re closing the gap for struggling learners. The Javits research and project successes have shown promising results and can serve as models to districts to turn this tragedy around. We should do more, not less, to support these efforts.

Congress must renew its commitment to the goal of expanding access to educational services for gifted children nationwide so that all gifted and talented students are able to realize their full potential. Again, we ask that you provide at least $11.25 million for the Javits Act for FY10.

Thank you for your consideration of our request.
Sincerely,

Chuck Grassley
Blanche L. Lincoln
Dick Lugar
Bob Casey, Jr.
Jay Rockefeller
Sherrod Brown
Barbara A. Mikulski
Donnelly

Chris Dodd
Charles Schumacher
Frank R. Lautenberg
Robert Menendez
Ron Wyden
Roland W. Burris

Jim Bunning
Tom Udall
Nun Feingold
Van Vause