

March 26, 2015

The Honorable Roy Blunt  
Chairman  
Subcommittee on Labor, Health, and  
Human Services, and Education  
Senate Committee on Appropriations  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Patty Murray  
Ranking Member  
Subcommittee on Labor, Health, and  
Human Services, and Education  
Senate Committee on Appropriations  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Blunt and Ranking Member Murray:

We write to request that, as you finalize the Subcommittee's Fiscal Year 2016 Appropriations bill, you provide sufficient funding for the Advanced Placement (AP) and International Baccalaureate (IB) programs authorized under Title I, Part G of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA); as well as funding for a next generation high school program, which could include funding to expand and evaluate dual enrollment programs and early college high school programs. Funding for the next generation high school program, dual enrollment programs, and early college high school programs could be allocated under the broad authority provided by Section 1502 of Title I, Part E of ESEA.

According to the U.S. Department of Education, approximately one in five students in the United States does not graduate from high school on time. With increasing numbers of jobs requiring some level of postsecondary education beyond high school, failure to graduate from high school makes it increasingly unlikely that high school dropouts will find good jobs in our changing economy. Furthermore, of the students who do graduate high school, many are not prepared for college or the workforce, with 20 percent of college students needing remediation, according to federal data. Improving high school graduation rates as well as the rigor of high school coursework is vital to our nation's economic interests.

For over a decade, the federal government has helped states and local districts provide access to accelerated learning models for students. The federal Advanced Placement programs provide funding to help cover the costs of AP and IB exam fees for low-income students around the nation. This program also provides competitive grants to states and districts to expand the number of AP and IB courses and increase access to college-level courses for students in high-need schools. Rural school districts have especially low rates of access to AP and IB courses, and funding for these programs would focus on expanding access to AP and IB courses in rural areas. Increasing funding for these programs would allow even more students to participate in these vital programs, which have been shown to improve high school graduation rates and allow students to save on college costs.

A next generation high school program could also improve the rigor of high school by providing funding to school districts to partner with employers and postsecondary institutions to develop accelerated learning models and work-based learning opportunities, including internships. The

program will increase student readiness to pursue postsecondary degrees in high-demand fields, particularly for student groups historically unrepresented in these fields. As a result, students will graduate from high school with credit toward a postsecondary credential and exposure to the workforce.

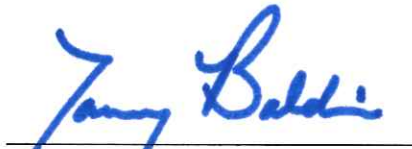
Finally, funding for a new demonstration project to implement and evaluate dual enrollment programs would help scale up these vital programs around the nation. Dual enrollment programs have been shown to help improve learning, keep students engaged in school, improve high school graduation rates, and reduce college costs for students.

Improving high school graduation rates and the transition between high school and postsecondary education and the workforce is critical to our nation's continued economic growth. This funding will help provide high school students with challenging academic opportunities that prepare them for both college and career. Thank you for your consideration of this request.

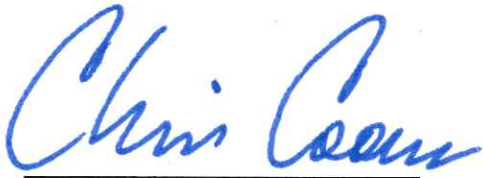
Sincerely,



Al Franken  
United States Senator



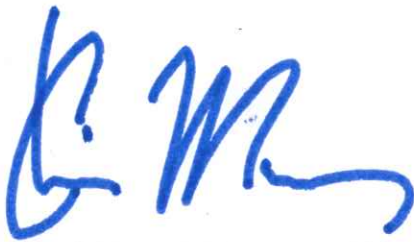
Tammy Baldwin  
United States Senator



Christopher A. Coons  
United States Senator



Jack Reed  
United States Senator



Christopher Murphy  
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