June 20th, 2011

The Honorable Tom Harkin
Chair
Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions
United States Senate
731 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510-1502

The Honorable Michael B. Enzi
Ranking Member
Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions
United States Senate
379A Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510-5004

Dear Chairman Harkin and Ranking Member Enzi:

As members of the Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) Education Coalition, we are writing you with our recommendations for the reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA), otherwise known as the No Child Left Behind Act. We look forward to working closely with you and the members of the Committee on Health, Education, Labor and Pensions (HELP) as you reauthorize this critical law.

Our Coalition is a broad alliance of education, business, professional, and science and technology organizations working aggressively to raise awareness in Congress, the Administration, and other organizations about the critical role that STEM education plays in enabling the U.S. to remain the economic and technological leader of the global marketplace of the 21st century.

According to the U.S. Department of Labor, 15 of the 20 fastest growing occupations projected for 2014 require preparation in STEM subjects. If our nation is to keep up with our international peers, we absolutely must step up our efforts to improve STEM education.

Our Coalition includes a wide range of stakeholders who are deeply committed to ensuring that STEM education is a top priority in the revised ESEA. We urge you and your colleagues to strongly consider the following recommendations to improve the Elementary and Secondary Education Act. We support:

- The inclusion of student performance in science alongside math and reading as a core element of the accountability system;
- Robust and dedicated programs to provide effective STEM-related professional development and preparation for educators and other educational innovation activities under Title II.B;
- Strengthening STEM-focused formula-funded programs that provide resources to each state for high-need students and areas, complemented with competitive grant programs in STEM education to promote ambitious reform efforts;

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• Federal efforts to empower each state to develop its own comprehensive STEM education action plan – including its own definition of STEM needs – that will include input from a wide range of business, professional, and education stakeholders;

• The integration of STEM-focused curricula, projects, and programs as high-priority allowable uses of funds under other ESEA programs that support classroom and field teaching and learning as well as out of school experiences such as afterschool and summer programs;

• A strong emphasis in K-12 learning environments on hands-on, experiential, inquiry-based and learner-centered student experiences and activities, including engineering design processes and digital access for STEM students and educators to help foster 21st Century skills;

• Federal efforts to encourage and foster ongoing collaborative state efforts to adopt “common core” or other high-quality standards in math and science;

• Targeted efforts to promote STEM subject master teachers and teacher specialists; and

• Federal efforts to expand the diversity of the STEM pipeline and workforce, including targeted initiatives to promote the inclusion of underrepresented minorities and women in STEM fields.

Our Coalition values our relationship with you and your HELP Committee colleagues. Please let us know if we can be of further assistance as you advance the reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act. Please contact James Brown, Executive Director of the Coalition at (202) 223-1887 or jfbrown@stemedcoalition.org with questions, comments, or for further information.

Respectfully,

National Science Teachers Association American Society of Civil Engineers
American Chemical Society Battelle
ASME Business-Higher Education Forum
Education Development Center, Inc. Campaign for Environment Literacy
Hands on Science Partnership Committee for the Advancement of STEM
Microsoft Corporation Specialty Schools
National Council of Teachers of Mathematics IEEE-USA
Alliance for Science and Technology Afterschool Alliance
Research in America (ASTRA) American Association of Colleges for
American Society for Engineering Education Teacher Education (AACTE)