

Secretary Arne Duncan
Office of the Secretary of Education
U.S. Department of Education
400 Maryland Avenue SW
Washington, DC 20202

February 26, 2010

Dear Secretary Duncan:

I am writing to express concern regarding the consolidation and elimination of numerous long-standing and effective programs in the Department of Education FY2011 Budget Request. The Joint National Committee for Languages and the National Council for Languages and International Studies (JNCL-NCLIS) represent 65 language and international education associations representing approximately 200,000 language professionals united to promote and expand meaningful and articulated opportunities for Americans to learn English and at least one additional language.

Although the Administration and the Department of Education have been promoting the need for global competency skills training for a well-rounded education and an economically sound future for the United States, the elimination of dedicated funding for the few language-related programs that exist directly contradicts this reform initiative. In order to “race to the top” globally, students need language and cultural skills in addition to English. The programs that have been consolidated, including the Foreign Language Assistance Program, give students access to foreign language and international education where they otherwise would not have this opportunity. It is only by continuing and expanding these programs that students will have the skills they need to compete in the 21st century and the competency necessary to build national security for our country.

The Department of Education justifies this consolidation of “narrowly targeted programs that focus on specific subject areas” because of the “need to strengthen instruction and increase achievement across the content area.” However, it is our belief and experience that without dedicated funding for language education, the programs aimed at increasing proficiency in second languages at the K-12 level will continue to lose funding to other content areas as they did in the years following the inception of No Child Left Behind (Center for Applied Linguistics 2009). With respect to possibly eliminating these

important programs through unnecessary competition instead of expanding them, the Department of Education sends the message that there is a lack of commitment to our students to becoming truly well-rounded, world-class learners and globally competent citizens in the 21st century.

We hope that you will consider working with us to not only reinstate the programs that are slated for consolidation and elimination, but to increase multilingual and culturally competent Americans beginning with this generation of young students.

Sincerely,

J. David Edwards, Ph.D.
Executive Director

cc: Representative John Kline
cc: Representative George Miller
cc: Senator Michael B. Enzi
cc: Senator Tom Harkin