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from the office of

Senator Edward M. Kennedy

of Massachusetts

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**STATEMENT OF SENATOR EDWARD M. KENNEDY
ON THE INTRODUCTION OF THE
"EDUCATIONAL EXCELLENCE FOR ALL CHILDREN ACT OF 1999"**

It is a privilege to introduce President Clinton's proposal for reauthorizing the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, the "Educational Excellence for All Children Act of 1999," along with Senators Dodd, Daschle, Murray, Schumer, Levin, and Dorgan. This is another strong step by the President to ensure that all children have the benefit of the best possible education.

Since 1993, President Clinton has consistently led the way on improving schools and making sure that all children meet high standards.

Today, as a result, almost every state has established high standards for its students. "High standards" is no longer just a term for academics experts and policy makers -- it is becoming a reality for the nation's schools and students.

The recently released National Assessment of Title I shows that student achievement is improving -- and that the federal government is an effective partner in that success. This result is good news for schools, good news for parents, and good news for students -- and it should be a wake up call to Congress. We need to do more to build on these emerging successes to ensure that every child has the opportunity for an excellent education.

At dinner tables and boardrooms across America, the topic of discussion is education. As a result of the progress we have made the past few years, we can look at the education glass on the table and say it's "half full" -- not "half empty" as critics of public schools would have the country believe.

Since the reauthorization of Title I in 1994, a non-partisan Independent Review Panel of twenty-two experts from across the country has been overseeing the evaluation of the program. As the largest federal investment in improving elementary and secondary schools, Title I is improving education for 11 million children in 45,000 schools with high concentrations of

poverty. It helps schools provide professional development for teachers, improve curriculums, and extend learning time, so that students meet high state standards of achievement.

Under the 1994 amendments to Title I, states were no longer allowed to set lower standards for children in the poorest communities than for students in more affluent communities. The results are clear. Students do well when expectations are set high and they are given the support they need and deserve.

Student achievement in reading and math has increased -- particularly the achievement of the poorest students. Since 1992, reading achievement for 9-year- olds in the highest poverty schools has increased by one whole grade level nationwide. Between 1990 and 1996, math scores of the poorest students also rose by a grade level.

Students are meeting higher state standards. According to state-reported results, students in the highest poverty elementary schools improved in 5 of 6 states reporting three-year data in reading and in 4 out of 5 states in math. Students in Connecticut, Maryland, North Carolina, and Texas made progress in both subjects.

Many urban school districts report that achievement also improved in their highest-poverty schools. In 10 of 13 large urban districts that report three-year trend data, more elementary students in the highest poverty schools are now meeting district or state standards of proficiency in reading or math. Six districts, including Houston, Dade County, New York, Philadelphia, San Antonio, and San Francisco, made progress in both subjects.

Federal funds are increasingly targeted to the poorest schools. The 1994 amendments to Title I shifted funds away from low-poverty schools and into high-poverty schools. Today, 95 percent of the highest-poverty schools receive Title I funds, up from 80 percent in 1993.

In addition, Title I funds help improve teaching and learning in the classroom. 99 percent of Title I funds go to the local level. 93 percent of those federal dollars are spent directly on instruction, while only 62 percent of all state and local education dollars are spent on instruction.

The best illustrations of these successes are in local districts and schools. In Baltimore County, Maryland, all but one of the 19 Title I schools increased student performance between 1993 and 1998. The success has come from Title I support for extended year programs, implementation of effective programs in reading, and intensive professional development for teachers.

At Roosevelt High School in Dallas, Texas, where 80 percent of the students are poor, Title I funds were used to increase parent involvement, train teachers to work more effectively with parents, and make other changes to bring high standards into every classroom. Student reading scores have nearly doubled, from the 40th percentile in 1992 to the 77th percentile in 1996. During the same period, math scores soared from the 16th to the 73rd percentile, and

writing scores rose from the 58th to the 84th percentile.

In addition to the successes supported by Title I, other indicators demonstrate that student achievement is improving. U.S. students scored near the top on the latest international assessment of reading. American 4th graders out-performed students from all other nations except Finland.

At Baldwin Elementary School in Boston, where 80 percent of the students are poor, performance on the Stanford 9 test rose substantially from 1996 to 1998 because of increases in teacher professional development and implementation of a whole-school reform plan to raise standards and achievement for all children. In 1996, 66 percent of the 3rd grade students scored in the lowest levels in math. In 1998, 100 percent scored in the highest levels. In 1997, 75 percent of 4th graders scored in the lowest levels in reading. In 1998, no 4th graders scored at the lowest level, and 56 percent scored in the highest levels.

The combined verbal and math scores on the SAT increased 19 points from 1982 to 1997, with the largest gain of 15 points occurring between 1992 and 1997. The average math score is at its highest level in 26 years.

Students are taking more rigorous subjects than ever -- and doing better in them. The proportion of high school graduates taking the core courses recommended in the 1983 report, *A Nation At Risk*, had increased to 52 percent by 1994, up from 14 percent in 1982 and 40 percent in 1990. Since 1982, the percentage of graduates taking biology, chemistry, and physics has doubled, rising from 10 percent in 1982 to 21 percent in 1994. With increased participation in advanced placement courses, the number of students that scored at 3 or above on the AP exams has risen nearly five-fold since 1982, from 131,871 in that year to 635,922 in 1998.

Clearly, the work is not done. These improvements are gratifying, but there is no cause for complacency. We must do more to ensure that all children have a good education. We must do more to increase support for programs like Title I to build on these successes and make them available to all children.

President Clinton's "Educational Excellence for All Children Act of 1999" builds on the success of the 1994 reauthorization of ESEA, which ensured that all children are held to the same high academic standards. This bill makes high standards the core of classroom activities in every school across the country -- and holds schools and school districts responsible for making sure all children meet those standards. The bill focuses on three fundamental ways to accomplish this goal: improving teacher quality, increasing accountability for results, and creating safe, healthy, and disciplined learning environments for children.

This year, the nation set a new record for elementary and secondary student enrollment. The figure will reach an all-time high of 53 million students -- 500,000 more students than last year. Communities, the states, and Congress must work together to see that these students

receive a good education.

Serious teacher shortages are being caused by the rising student enrollments, and also by the growing number of teacher retirements. The nation's schools need to hire 2.2 million public school teachers over the next ten years, just to hold their own. If we don't act now, the need for more teachers will put even greater pressure in the future on school districts to lower their standards and hire more unqualified teachers. Too many teachers leave within the first three years of teaching -- including 30-50% of teachers in urban areas -- because they don't get the support and mentoring they need. Veteran teachers need on-going professional development opportunities to enhance their knowledge and skills, to integrate technology into the curriculum, and to help children meet high state standards.

Many communities are working hard to attract, keep, and support good teachers -- and often they're succeeding. The North Carolina Teaching Fellows Program has recruited 3,600 high-ability high school graduates to go into teaching. The students agree to teach for four years in the state's public schools, in exchange for a four-year college scholarship. School principals in the state report that the performance of the fellows far exceeds that of other new teachers.

In Chicago, a program called the "Golden Apple Scholars of Illinois" recruits promising young men and women into teaching by selecting them during their junior year of high school, then mentoring them through the rest of high school, college, and five years of actual teaching. 60 Golden Apple scholars enter the teaching field each year, and 90 percent of them stay in the classroom.

Colorado State University's "Project Promise" recruits prospective teachers from fields such as law, geology, chemistry, stock trading and medicine. Current teachers mentor graduates in their first two years of teaching. More than 90 percent of the recruits go into teaching, and 80 percent stay for at least five years.

New York City's Mentor Teacher Internship Program has increased the retention of new teachers. In Montana, only 4 percent of new teachers in mentoring programs left after their first year of teaching, compared with 28 percent of teachers without the benefit of mentoring.

New York City's District 2 has made professional development the central component for improving schools. The idea is that student learning will increase as the knowledge of educators grows -- and it's working. In 1996, student math scores were second in the city.

Massachusetts has invested $60 million in the Teacher Quality Endowment Fund to launch the 12-to-62 Plan for Strengthening Massachusetts Future Teaching Force. The program is a comprehensive effort to improve recruitment, retention, and professional development of teachers throughout their careers.

Congress should build on and support these successful efforts across the country to

ensure that the nation's teaching force is strong and successful in the years ahead.

The Administration's proposal makes a major investment in ensuring quality teachers in every classroom, especially in areas where the needs are greatest. It authorizes funds to help states and communities improve the recruitment, retention, and on-going professional development of teachers. It will provide states and local school districts with the support they need to recruit excellent teacher candidates, to retain and support promising beginning teachers through mentoring programs, and to provide veteran teachers with the on-going professional development they need to help all children meet high standards of achievement. It will also support a national effort to recruit and train school principals.

In recognition of the national need to recruit 2.2 million teachers over the next decade, the Administration's proposal will fund projects to recruit and retain high-quality teachers and school principals in high-need areas. The Transition to Teaching proposal will continue and expand the successful "Troops to Teachers" initiative by recruiting and supporting mid-career professionals in the armed forces as teachers, particularly in high-poverty school districts and high-need subjects.

The proposal holds states accountable for having qualified teachers in the classroom. It requires that within four years, 95 percent of all teachers must be certified, working toward full certification through an alternative route that will lead to full certification within three years, or are fully certified in another state and working toward meeting state-specific requirements. It also requires states to ensure that at least 95 percent of secondary school teachers have academic training or demonstrated competence in the subject area in which they teach.

Parents and educators across the country also say that reducing class size is at the top of their priorities for education reform. It is obvious that smaller class sizes, particularly in the early grades, improve student achievement. We must help states and communities reduce class sizes in the early grades, when individual attention is needed most. Congress made a down-payment last year on helping communities reduce class size, and we can't walk away from that commitment now.

The Educational Excellence for All Children Act authorizes the full 7-years of this program, so that communities will be able to hire 100,000 teachers across the country.

We know qualified teachers in small classes make a difference for students. There is also mounting evidence that the President and Congress took the right step in 1994 by making standards-based reform the centerpiece of the 1994 reauthorization. In schools and school districts across the country that have set high standards and required accountability for results, student performance has risen, and the numbers of failing schools has fallen.

Nevertheless, 10 to 15 percent of high school graduates today -- up to 340,000 graduates each year -- do not continue their education. Often, they cannot balance a checkbook or write a

letter to a credit card company to explain an error on a bill. Even worse, 11 percent of high school students never make it to graduation.

We are not meeting our responsibility to these students -- and it is unconscionable to continue to abdicate our responsibility. Every day, children -- poor children, minority children, English language learners, children with disabilities -- face barriers to a good education, and also face the high-stakes consequences of failing in the future because the system is failing them now.

Schools and communities must do more to see that students obtain the skills and knowledge they need in order to move on to the next grade and to graduate. If students are socially promoted or forced to repeat the same grade without changing the instruction that failed the first time, they are more likely to drop out. Clearly, these practices must end.

The Administration's proposal makes public schools the centers of opportunity for all children -- and holds schools accountability for providing this opportunity.

It requires schools, school districts, and states to provide parents with report cards that include information about student performance, the condition of school buildings, class sizes, quality of teachers, and safety and discipline in their schools. These report cards give parents the information they need to see that their schools are improving and their children are getting the education they deserve.

The proposal also holds schools and districts accountable for children meeting the standards. The bill requires schools and districts to end the unsound educational practices of socially promoting children or making them repeat a grade. States must collect data on social promotion and retention rates as an indicator of whether children are meeting high standards, and schools must implement responsible promotion policies. The proposal is designed to eliminate the dismal choice between social promotion and repeating a grade. It does so in several ways -- by increasing support for early education programs, by improving early reading skills, by improving the quality of the teaching force, by providing extended learning time through after-school and summer-school programs, and by creating safe, disciplined learning environments for children.

Last year in Boston, School Superintendent Tom Payzant ended social promotion and traditional grade retention. With extensive community involvement, Mayor Menino, Superintendent Payzant, and the School Committee implemented a policy to clarify for everyone -- schools, teachers, parents, and students -- the requirements needed to advance from one grade to the next, and to graduate from a Boston public school.

The call for a new promotion and retention policy came primarily from middle and high schools, where teachers were facing students who had not mastered the skills they needed in order to go on to a higher grade. Now, all students will have to demonstrate that they have mastered the content and skills in every grade. If they fail to do so, schools and teachers must

intervene with proven effective practices to help the students, such as attending summer-school and after-school programs, providing extra help during the regular school day, and working more closely with parents to ensure better results. In ways like these, schools and teachers are held accountable for results.

The Administration's proposal gives children who have fallen behind in their school work the opportunities they need to catch up, to meet legitimate requirements for graduation, to master basic skills, and meet high standards of achievement. A high school diploma should be more than a certificate of attendance. It should be a certificate of achievement.

Finally, the President's proposal helps create safe, disciplined, and healthy environments for children. Last year, President Clinton led a successful effort to increase funding for after-school programs in the current year. But far more needs to be done.

Effective programs are urgently needed for children of all ages during the many hours they are not in school each week and during the summer. The "Home Alone" problem is serious, and deserves urgent attention. Every day, 5 million children, many as young as 8 or 9 years old, are left alone after school. Juvenile crime peaks in the hours between 3 p.m. and 8 p.m. A recent study of gang crimes by juveniles in Orange County, California, shows that 60 percent of all juvenile gang crimes occur on schools days and peak immediately after school dismissal. Children left unsupervised are more likely to be involved in illegal activities and destructive behavior. We need constructive alternatives to keep children off the streets, away from drugs, and out of trouble.

We need to do all we can to encourage communities to develop after-school activities that will engage children. The proposal will triple our investment in after-school programs, so that one million children will have access to worthwhile activities.

The Act also requires school districts and schools to have sound discipline policies that are consistent with the Individual with Disabilities Education Act, are fair, and are developed with the participation of the school community. In addition, the Safe and Drug-Free Schools and Communities Act is strengthened to support research-based prevention programs to address violence and drug-use by youth.

In order to develop a healthy environment for children, local school districts will be able to use 5 percent of their funds to support coordinated services, so that children and their families will have better access to social, health, and educational services necessary for students to do well in school.

In all of these ways and more ways, President Clinton's proposal will help schools and communities bring high standards into every classroom and ensure that all children meet them. Major new investments are needed to improve teacher quality -- hold schools, school districts, and states accountable for results -- increase parent involvement -- expand after-school programs

-- reduce class size in the early grades -- and ensure that schools meet strict discipline standards. With investments like these, we are doing all we can to ensure that the nation's public schools are the best in the world.

Education must continue to be a top priority in this Congress. We must address the needs of public schools, families, and children so that we ensure that all children have an opportunity to attend an excellent public school now and throughout the 21st Century.

President Clinton's proposal is an excellent series of needed initiatives, and it deserves broad bipartisan support. I look forward to working with my colleagues to make it the heart of this year's ESEA Reauthorization Bill.