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Council of the Great City Schools
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Statement on the Financial Support of the School District of Philadelphia

By

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WASHINGTON -- The Council of the Great City Schools, the nation's primary coalition of large urban public school systems, strongly supports U.S. Secretary of Education Arne Duncan's call this morning for greater resources to our highest poverty urban school systems generally, and for the School District of Philadelphia particularly. Our urban school systems are making important strides in improving academic attainment, lowering dropout rates, boosting graduation, and reducing suspensions and expulsions. Now is not the time for either Congress or the states to be pulling back on the investments that have helped fuel that progress.

Historically, the School District of Philadelphia and the children it serves have been badly underfunded. In fact, the school district continues to be one of the most inequitably funded of all big-city school systems anywhere in the country. The state needs to step forward to correct this long-standing injustice. And Congress needs to rethink both its budget and the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) reauthorization proposals that would further disinvest in the city.

For instance, an ESEA proposal called "portability" would reduce the federal Title I allocation to Philadelphia by some \$44.5 million, funds that are badly needed by the city school system in order to provide the teachers, materials, and supports students need to improve their academic attainment. Other potential formula proposals would decrease federal aid to the city by similar amounts, and Congressional budget proposals could cut deeper if approved and implemented.

The nation needs an ESEA reauthorization and federal budget that continues to invest in our schools and support our students. Secretary Duncan's visit to Philadelphia today to highlight these issues is a step in the right direction. Earlier this week, President Obama indicated that the nation faces an important choice. The Council of the Great City Schools couldn't agree more. We trust that Congress and the states will make the right ones.

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