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October 11, 2011

The Honorable Jeff Merkley
Member, Health, Education, Labor and Pensions Committee
U.S. Senate
107 Russell Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Merkley:

On behalf of Triangle Coalition for Science and Technology Education I wish to express our strong support for the *Preparing Students for Success in the Global Economy Act of 2011* (S.1675) to improve upon the way in which the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA), also known as, No Child Left Behind (NCLB), addresses the critical challenge of improving STEM education. As an organization that has spent more than 25 years working on STEM education issues we are proud to partner with you in your efforts.

We commend you on the way in which your proposed legislation will encourage and inspire more of our best and brightest students – especially those from underrepresented or disadvantaged groups – to study in STEM fields. In addition S.1675 will improve the content knowledge and professional skills of the STEM educator workforce, help to recruit and retain highly-skilled STEM educators, and, perhaps most importantly improve the resources available for learning in STEM fields.

We are pleased to see that the bill attempts to strike a balance between competitive and formula grant funding and encourages state flexibility by empowering states to involve a broad array of stakeholders in the determination of their state's most critical STEM needs.

Further, it should be noted that your bill is fiscally responsible, seeking to amend and improve the existing Department of Education Math and Science Partnership (Title IIB of ESEA) rather than creating a new initiative. Most importantly, we strongly support the focus on innovation through a variety of best practices such as STEM Master Teachers, hands-on engineering competitions, and innovative professional development models that S.1675 provides.

The future of our country's economic competitiveness depends greatly on our how well our students perform in STEM fields. The Commerce Department study released this past summer highlights the fact that growth in STEM jobs grew three times faster over the past 10 years than non-STEM jobs. In short, if we are to keep up with our global competitors, we must step up our investments in STEM education.

Thank you for your leadership on this critical issue.

Respectfully,