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Vance Ablott

May 24, 2011

The Honorable Mark Begich
111 Russell Senate Office Building,
District of Columbia 20510-0201

Dear Senator Begich:

We are writing to congratulate you on your outstanding commitment to science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) education. Your recent introduction of The Effective STEM Teaching and Learning Act, S. 463, as well as your co-sponsorship of the E2 for Innovation Act, S. 969, demonstrates your understanding of the great need this country has for improvement in STEM education and your willingness to take steps to ensure that we as a nation are able to compete in the increasingly more global economy.

We endorse the intent of the legislation to provide funding for the states to encourage the promotion of sound STEM education programs. The specific inclusion of technology and engineering disciplines in the language is a strong step toward the development of a comprehensive approach to integrative nature of STEM education and the critical role of these subjects in the overall innovation enterprise that drives our economy.

We urge you to consider that the competitive grant structure will, however, mean that some states, including some with very effective programs under the current Title II part B MSP program, will be at risk and may lose funding at this critical time for education across the country. The recent competitive program, Race to the Top and i3, give us some insight into the difficulties states, particularly rural states, have in these types of competitions.

As the Senate takes up discussion on S. 463, we would urge you to consider the possibility of modifying it to allow a percentage of the funds to be distributed under block grant formulas to the states to support the continuation of existing, or the implementation of proven programs at the state level to develop better teaching practices or learning outcomes. The remaining, smaller percentage of the funds could then be set aside for competitive grants to states or districts, working in conjunction with partners like institutions of higher education or non-profit organizations, to attempt bold new initiatives with promise for not only success, but also replication and dissemination. These competitive grants could be structured in such a fashion as to require some level of matching funds, for example from the state, corporate partners, or community, to leverage the federal investment during these tough economic times.



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Like you, we firmly believe that America's future will require a more technologically literate population and we recognize that it is innovation that will drive not only future jobs growth, but also creative solutions to the major issues in energy, medicine, and quality of life. We would welcome the opportunity to work with you on this legislation to ensure that your goals of improving STEM education are not only met, but exceeded.

Best regards,

*Triangle Coalition for Science and Technology Education
International Technology and Engineering Educators Association
National Center for Technological Literacy*

cc: Senator Carper, Senator Lieberman, Senator Shaheen, Senator Coons,
Senator Klobuchar