

[Date]

The Honorable [Name of Representative]
United States House of Representatives
[Office Number] House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Congressman [Name of Representative]:

[Name of Church or Christian School], which is a member of the Old Dominion Association of Church Schools, urges you to help protect the freedom of private, faith-based schools as Congress works to renew the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (section 9506 in No Child Left Behind). The language that has been included in ESEA since its inception has protected the freedom of private, faith-based education to exist. Language has also been included which allows for equitable participation for private school students in programs designed to help disadvantaged students, at the time protecting the autonomy of these schools.

All of us agree that children are the future of our country and that they should have the opportunity to receive an excellent education. The Old Dominion Association of Church Schools shares this passion as our member schools offer a high-quality education for their students, regardless of their economic status or background. The purpose of ODACS ministries is to provide quality academic programs and to develop Godly character and good citizenship in our students. We believe every child has unique, God-given potential; and our member church schools are committed to helping each child reach this potential. ODACS ministries have strong accountability to parents. The autonomous nature of our schools allows them the freedom to educate children in the context of a Christian world view. As a result of adhering to their mission and of being accountable to parents, ODACS schools have experienced great success in educating their students.

In addition to section 9506, the NCLB Act (and ESEA before) prohibited the establishment of a national curriculum (section 9527), national testing (section 9529), mandatory national teacher certification (section 9530), and a national student database (section 9531). We urge maintaining this language in the reauthorization of ESEA. Efforts to control curriculum, standards, testing, and teacher certification from the federal level would not only greatly endanger the individualized instruction that is necessary for every child to receive an excellent education. They would also jeopardize the religious freedom of faith-based schools.

The current reform measures being promulgated by the Department of Education through grant competitions and waiver opportunities emphasize the adoption of common standards, improvement in assessments and data collection, and teacher qualifications. However, as federal funds are linked to these "innovations," the end result will be increased federal control over education and a decreased ability of schools to meet the individual needs of the students in their schools.

We urge Congress to maintain the current language which allows for diversity in educational methods to meet the needs of all students and which also protects the freedoms of private and faith-based educational institutions. We look forward to working together on the reauthorization of ESEA.

Sincerely,

[Your Name]