



417 Walnut Street  
Harrisburg, PA 17101-1902  
717 255-3252 / 800 225-7224  
FAX 717 255-3298  
www.pachamber.org

January 19, 2010

Secretary Arne Duncan  
U.S. Department of Education  
400 Maryland Avenue, SW  
Washington, D.C. 20202

Dear Secretary Duncan,

The Pennsylvania Chamber of Business and Industry understands that the Pennsylvania Department of Education is submitting a "Race to the Top" application to the U.S. Department of Education for additional funding. On behalf of our thousands of state-wide members in the business community, the PA Chamber supports the department's application for these funds.

These additional funds will enable the department to implement a number of strategies supported by the PA Chamber as part of its member-driven educational priorities. Our members believe that these reforms will improve Pennsylvania's public education system and better prepare our students for success.

We support the use of these additional funds for:

- The use of merit or performance pay for teaching professionals, as it rewards educators that have demonstrated effectiveness in the classroom and also provides a stronger accountability system for superintendents, principals and teachers.
- Assistance for charter schools, as they are in the early stages of development and these funds will be beneficial to their growth. We are pleased to learn that charter schools will be given equal access to funds as LEAs in order to improve their instructional performance. This is particularly important as charter schools help provide families with competitive and dynamic education curriculum options for their children.
- The use of more comprehensive data collection and application of data, which will help improve student proficiency by identifying early indications of learning difficulties in students. The U.S. Chamber of Commerce conducted a state-by-state report card in 2007 and 2009 in its "Leaders and Laggards" reports and gave Pennsylvania a "C" in the data systems category in both reports.

We sincerely request your authorization of the Pennsylvania Department of Education's application for "Race to the Top" and thank you for your consideration. The use of these funds will better enable Pennsylvania to provide its students with a higher quality education.

Sincerely,

  
Gene Barr  
Vice President, Government and Public Affairs

Cc: Secretary Gerald Zahorchak, Pennsylvania Department of Education