

March 11, 2009

The Honorable Arne Duncan
U.S Department of Education
Office of the Secretary
400 Maryland Avenue, SW
Washington, DC 20202

Dear Secretary Duncan:

I was delighted to read your memorandum detailing the broad guidelines for the unprecedented federal investment in education through the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA). Without question, this investment presents an extraordinary opportunity to improve student performance by advancing important and effective education reforms.

As a Mayor, I see first-hand the devastating effects of the current economy on constituents, local businesses, and social service organizations. Additionally, we are severely challenged in our ability to protect the progress we have made revitalizing and strengthening the City of Providence. Without a doubt, investing in schools and enacting meaningful, proven education reforms are among the most powerful steps we can take to reverse this economic downturn and ensure the long-term vitality of our city.

Unfortunately, I fear the potential transformative impact of ARRA is undermined by the spending proposals in the budget recently submitted by Rhode Island Governor Donald Carcieri. Rather than seizing an opportunity for strategic, increased funding, his budget substitutes ARRA funds to restore reductions in state aid to schools. Increased investment intended to move us forward, is instead only maintaining the status quo. Under the Governor's proposed FY09 budget, ARRA state education stabilization funds, which are meant to address the education needs of low-income school districts, are effectively diverted to wealthier school districts in Rhode Island. I share the same concern for the use of Title I and IDEA funding for FY09 and beyond.

I fully appreciate the current economic environment requires difficult decisions about allocating resources. In fact, I applauded Governor Carcieri's attempt to make meaningful reforms in the operation of government in his original FY09 supplemental budget. His current proposal, however, does nothing more than plug holes with one-time revenue sources, while reducing the commitment to education funding in Providence.

I write to you today, to bring this matter to your attention and to urge you to use the authority of your office to prohibit this proposal by denying any waiver request to authorize this action. The Governor's own budget officer has acknowledged she is not

certain the Governor's proposal is legal. I urge you to prohibit this effort to expend ARRA funds in a way contrary to their intended use. By doing so, you can ensure the funds committed to education in ARRA are instead expended consistent with the goals set forth by you and the President.

Finally, I would like to thank you and the President for your outreach to local leaders throughout this process. This funding, if allocated as intended, will have an enormously positive impact on the youth of Providence for years to come.

I remain committed to working with all state and federal stakeholders to ensure the ambitious goals you have so eloquently and powerfully expressed are realized.

Warm regards,

David N. Cicilline
Mayor