



American Federation  
of Teachers, AFL-CIO

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AFT Teachers  
AFT PSRP  
AFT Higher Education  
AFT Public Employees  
AFT Healthcare

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September 20, 2007

The Honorable George Miller  
Chairman  
House Committee on Education and Labor  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Miller:

On behalf of the more than 1.4 million members of the American Federation of Teachers, I am writing to reaffirm the AFT's position on the pay-for-performance provision in the No Child Left Behind reauthorization discussion draft.

Our position is clear. The AFT does not believe that the federal government should mandate the use of student test scores to evaluate teachers. The AFT does believe that the decision to use or not use student test scores as part of a teacher evaluation system should be made at the local level by the district officials and teachers who are directly affected by and most knowledgeable about the differential compensation plans that will work in their schools. The AFT believes that compensation is a mandatory matter of collective bargaining subject to state and local, not federal, law.

In a 2005 letter we sent to your office about the performance pay proposal in TEACH, we expressed concern that such "value-added" programs have not been thoroughly developed, researched and evaluated. Specifically, we believe that attention and resources should be focused on improving the whole school by dealing with infrastructure issues, providing for a solid curriculum, addressing safety and discipline issues, developing programs for parental involvement and supporting staff with strong professional development. These, not just money, are the incentives that will make schools appealing to students and their parents and to teachers.

We have had numerous discussions with your staff in which we have made our position clear. Your staff has told us that you do not intend to alter the language mandating the use of student test scores.

The press and, no doubt, others find it convenient to mischaracterize the AFT's position. It is simpler to say "teacher unions" oppose performance pay than it is to take the time to understand and explain the AFT's carefully reasoned position. This process and our nation's students and schools deserve better.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Edward J. McElroy". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Edward J. McElroy  
President

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