

**Congress of the United States**  
**Washington, DC 20515**

April 3, 2009

Hon. David R. Obey, Chairman  
Subcommittee on Labor, HHS, Education and  
Related Agencies  
House Appropriations Committee  
2358-B Rayburn House Office Building

Hon. Todd Tiahrt, Ranking Member  
Subcommittee on Labor, HHS, Education and  
Related Agencies  
House Appropriation Committee  
1016 Longworth House Office Building

Dear Chairman Obey and Ranking Member Tiahrt,

As supporters of youth mentoring, we write to request that you include \$100 million for mentoring in the FY2010 Labor-HHS-Education appropriations bills – \$50 million each for the U.S. Department of Education’s (ED) Mentoring Programs and the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services’ (HHS) Mentoring Children of Prisoners program.

In particular, we want to call your attention to the \$50 million we are requesting for ED’s Mentoring Programs. Launched in 2003, this program has brought thousands of caring volunteers into the schools and lives of our nation’s youth. The program’s strong appeal stems from its ability to serve youth who may not be reached by other forms of mentoring and its potential to connect a broad array of community members with youths’ daily academic and social experiences. Schools are also able to capitalize on the knowledge, referrals, and support of the many caring adults who are already in the setting. And, since the meetings typically occur on school grounds, safety concerns are allayed.

If funding is not continued for ED’s Mentoring Programs for FY2010, 164 current grantees in 45 states and the District of Columbia would see their grants terminated a year early. Ending these grants will likely result in dozens of grantees closing their programs or having to downsize, prematurely ending hundreds, if not thousands, of mentoring relationships. Research clearly shows that when mentoring relationships end unexpectedly, it can have a detrimental impact on the child, setting them further back. It would also mean that any grants awarded with FY2009 funds would only receive a year of funding, instead of the second in an expected three-year grant.

In addition to the immediate impact on existing grantees, a reduction in the funding of ED’s Mentoring Programs will mean the end of the only authorized federal program that supports mentoring programs that serve a wide range of children. This will ultimately mean fewer children in mentoring relationships, which many communities can ill-afford in the current economic crisis when families are undergoing enormous stress – particularly if parents are forced to take on additional jobs or jobs at odd hours to supplement or replace lost income.

We are pleased that President Obama included mentoring in the March 19, 2009 *TIME* Magazine article on national service. We look forward to working with the Administration to ensure ED's Mentoring Programs grants awards only the highest quality programs dedicated to helping children in desperate need of a mentor.

We also request that you provide \$50 million in funding for the HHS Mentoring Children of Prisoners program, as proposed in the President's FY2010 budget request. This authorized program provides competitive grants to local mentoring organizations to help them match children of incarcerated parents with caring adult mentors.

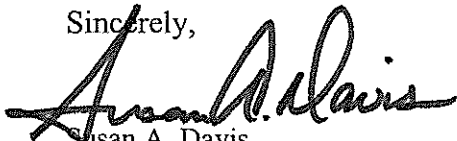
Numerous studies document that mentors help young people augment social skills and emotional well-being, improve cognitive skills, and plan for the future. High-quality mentoring also results in better attendance at school, lowers dropout rates, and decreases involvement with drugs and violent behavior.

An estimated 15 million children are currently in need of mentors. To continue expanding capacity and serving more children, mentoring programs need access to grant programs, such as ED's Mentoring Grants and the HHS Mentoring Children of Prisoners program. Now is the time to support the federal government's investment in youth mentoring.

Congress has thus far restored funding for this program each year it has been proposed for a major cut or elimination. We realize there are difficult choices to make in the budget process, but ask that you continue your support for this vital federal program.

We welcome the opportunity to work with you to provide \$100 million to support mentoring. Thank you very much for your time and attention.

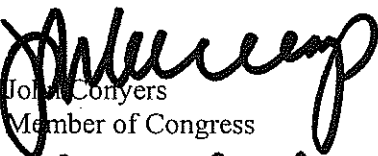
Sincerely,



Susan A. Davis  
Member of Congress



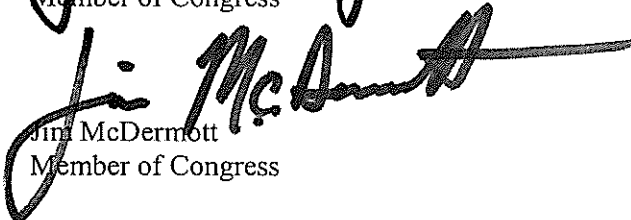
Mike Rogers (MI)  
Member of Congress



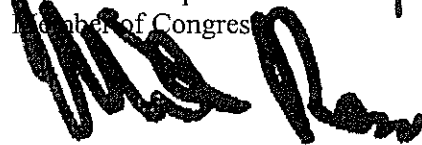
John Conyers  
Member of Congress



Michael E. Capuano  
Member of Congress



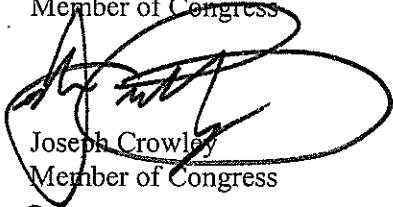
Jim McDermott  
Member of Congress



Mike Ross  
Member of Congress



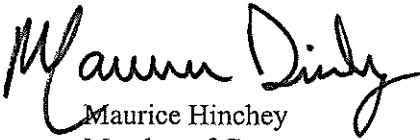
Robert "Bobby" Scott  
Member of Congress



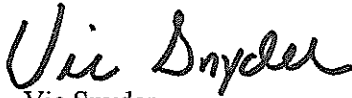
Joseph Crowley  
Member of Congress



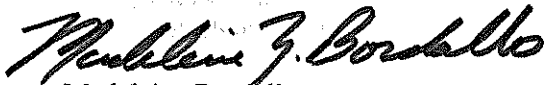
Bob Etheridge  
Member of Congress



Maurice Hinchey  
Member of Congress



Vic Snyder  
Member of Congress



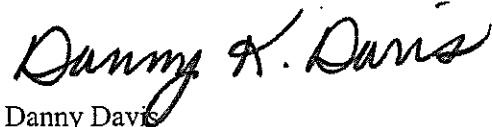
Madeleine Bordallo  
Member of Congress



Doris Matsui  
Member of Congress



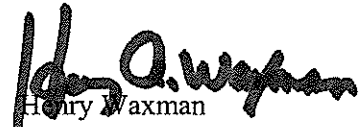
Raúl M. Grijalva  
Member of Congress



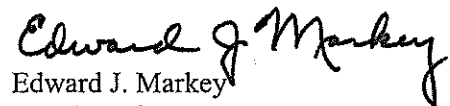
Danny Davis  
Member of Congress



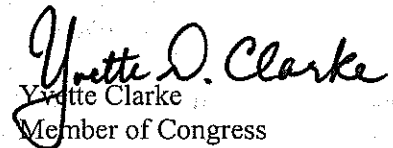
James Oberstar  
Member of Congress



Henry Waxman  
Member of Congress



Edward J. Markey  
Member of Congress



Yvette Clarke  
Member of Congress



Vernon Ehlers  
Member of Congress