

## Congress of the United States House of Representatives

April 2, 2009

The Honorable David Obey  
Chairman  
Subcommittee on Labor, HHS, Education and  
Related Agencies  
Committee on Appropriations  
B 300 Rayburn House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Todd Tiahrt  
Ranking Member  
Subcommittee on Labor, HHS, Education and  
Related Agencies  
Committee on Appropriations  
2441 Rayburn House Office Building  
Washington DC 20515

Dear Chairman Obey and Ranking Member Tiahrt:

We are writing to express our strong support for \$346.5 million for the State Grants portion of the Safe and Drug Free Schools and Communities (SDFSC) program. This amount of funding is necessary to effectively serve all of America's youth with vital drug and violence prevention programming. This amount reflects the FY 2008 House-passed level and the level appropriated in FY2006 and FY2007.

As you are aware, SDFSC is the federal government's primary initiative to prevent drug use in and around schools. It is currently used by 97% of the nation's school districts and serves more than 37 million youth per year.

During his recent address to the Joint Session of Congress, President Obama set an ambitious goal of ensuring that the United States has the highest proportion of college graduates by the year 2020. Without a specific focus on drug prevention, this goal will be unattainable. Research has established a clear link between the academic achievement of our nation's children and the prevention of substance use in schools. The 2002 National Household Survey on Drug Abuse Report entitled *Marijuana Among Youths* substantiated the connection between substance abuse and academic performance, noting that youths with an average grade of D or below were more than four times as likely to have used marijuana in the past year as youths with an average grade of A.<sup>1</sup> Additionally, a recent study by the University of Washington found that students who use alcohol or other drugs are up to five times more likely to drop out of school.<sup>2</sup>

The SDFSC program is the backbone of youth drug prevention and intervention efforts. It provides all of America's youth with vital substance abuse and violence education, prevention and intervention programming, and is clearly making a difference. Trends from the recent *Monitoring the Future (MTF) Survey* show that overall drug use by youth has declined by 25% over the past seven years (2001 – 2008).

<sup>1</sup> Office of Applied Studies, Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA). *SAMHSA's National Household Survey on Drug Abuse Report—Marijuana Use among Youths*. July 19, 2002. Available at [www.samhsa.gov/oas/nhsda.htm](http://www.samhsa.gov/oas/nhsda.htm).

<sup>2</sup> Lane, J., Gerstein, D., Huang, L., & Wright, D., (1998) *Risk and protective factors for adolescent drug use: Findings from the 1997 National Household Survey on Drug Abuse*. [Online]. Available at [www.samhsa.gov/hhsurvey/hhsurvey.html](http://www.samhsa.gov/hhsurvey/hhsurvey.html); Bray, J.W., Zarkin, G.A., Ringwalt, C., & Qi, J. (2000). "The relationship between marijuana initiation and dropping out of high school." *Health Economics*, 9(1), 9–18.

Funds from the SDFSC program are being used effectively and can demonstrate measurable results. States have exercised due diligence and collected the data and information on their programs. Among such data are the following examples:

- New York – Reported a **30.3% decrease** in the number of high school students reporting past 30 day marijuana use, down from 26.7% in 2002 to 18.6% in 2007.
- Kansas – Reported a **32.0% decrease** in past 30 day use of marijuana among 10<sup>th</sup> graders, down from 19.4% in 1999 to 13.2% in 2006.

States throughout the country are achieving similar results. We have attached an information sheet that further demonstrates the effectiveness of these programs nationwide.

Drug prevention is a critical component to ensuring the academic success of our youth. If the challenges in students' learning environments, particularly substance use, are not addressed, then President Obama's goal of ensuring that the U.S. has the highest proportion of college graduates by 2020 will not be realized. Prevention efforts are showing concrete results. Now is the time to capitalize on these results and make sure that substance use rates continue to decline by fully funding the State Grants portion of the SDFSC program. Given the inverse correlation between funding drug prevention programs and youth drug use – when funding wanes, youth drug use surges as it did in the mid- to late-1990s – the importance of prevention programs cannot be stressed enough.

For most children, schools serve as one of the only sources of information about the harms of drug use. The costs associated with drug, alcohol and tobacco abuse adds 10 percent—or \$41 billion—to already-strained school budgets and has a devastating impact on the educational performance of students. We ask that you support the FY 2008 House-passed funding level of \$346.5 million for the State Grants portion of the SDFSC program for FY 2010.

Thank you for your consideration and please do not hesitate to contact us if you have any questions.

Sincerely,



Sander Levin  
Member of Congress

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Mark Souder  
Member of Congress



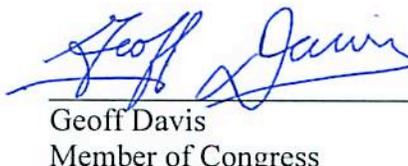
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Lois Capps  
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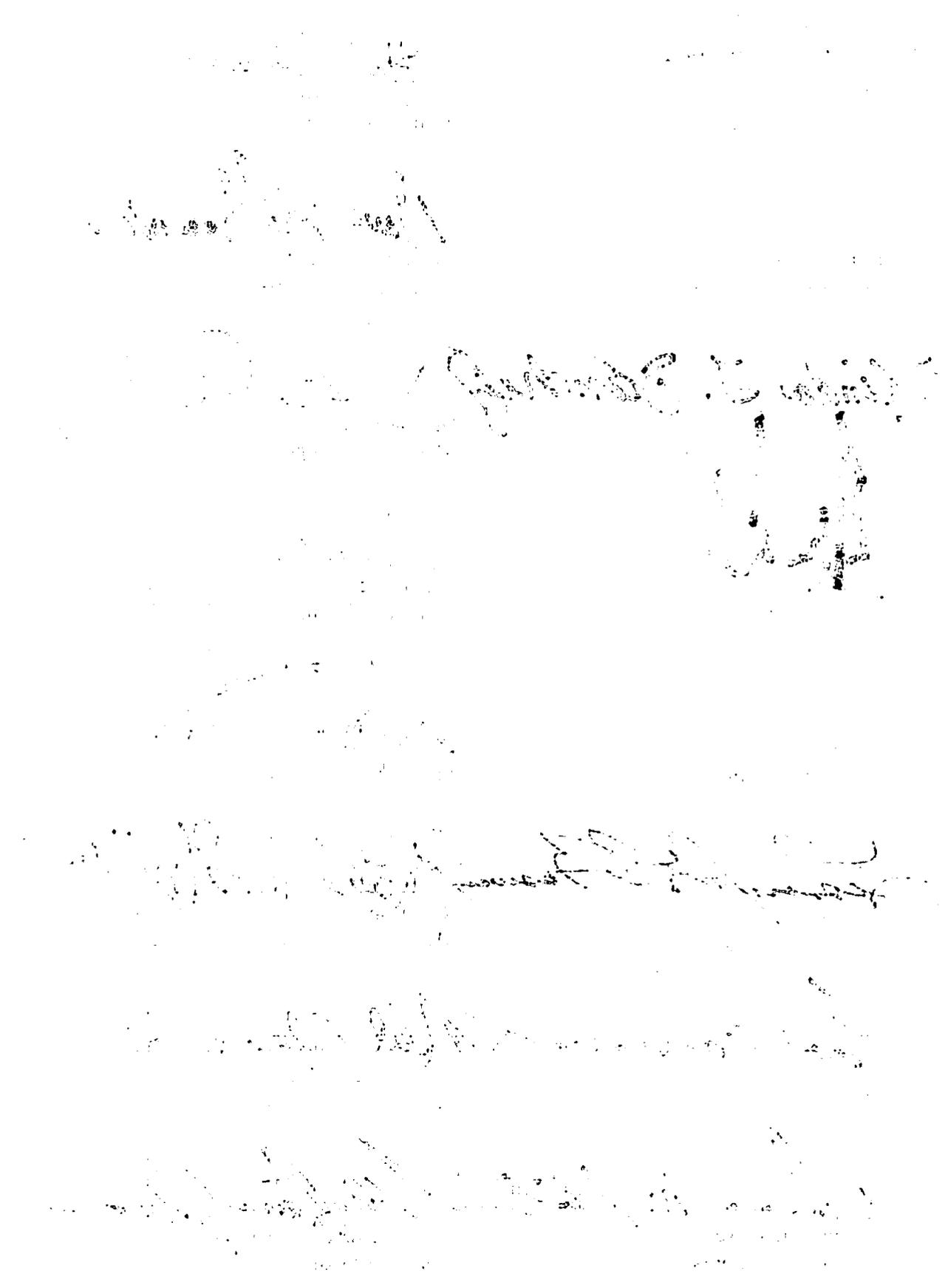
*Neil Abercrombie*

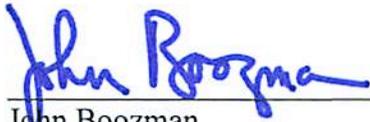
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Donna Christensen  
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*Eddie Bernice Johnson*

Eddie Bernice Johnson  
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John Boozman  
Member of Congress



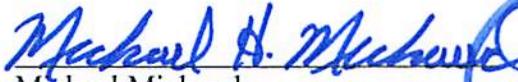
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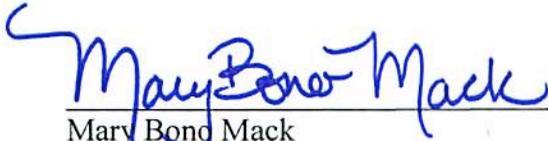
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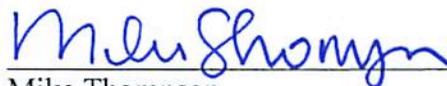
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