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FOREIGN RELATIONS
AGRICULTURE
SPECIAL COMMITTEE ON AGING

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510-3205

March 31, 2010

Dear Colleague,

Please join me in sending a letter to Chairman Harkin and Ranking Member Cochran to encourage the Appropriations Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human Services, Education, and Related Agencies to restore \$295 million in funding for state grants through the Office of Safe and Drug Free Schools at the Department of Education. This grant program was eliminated in FY2010.

These grants have historically been used to fund a large portion of local school-based anti-drug and anti-violence activities, such as mentoring and awareness programming. With state and local budgets stretched thin, many K-12 school districts in my state and across the country do not have ready funding alternatives for carrying out programs that have been supported by federal grants.

This is simply not the right time to cut funding for anti-drug programs. Drug abuse, school-based violence, and gang activity continue to pose significant challenges to schools and communities across the United States. According to the 2008 Monitoring our Future study, 47.4 percent of 12th graders admitted to illicit drug use over the course of their lifetime. In my state of New York, heroin use is on the rise among school-aged populations. In addition, recent data from the Office of National Drug Control Policy and the Department of Justice shows that teens and young adults nation-wide do not fully understand the dangers posed by prescription drug abuse.

I hope that you will join me in this effort to ensure that schools have the resources that they need to prevent illicit drug use. If you would like to co-sign this letter, please contact Jordan Baugh, of my staff, at 224-7082, by **COB Wednesday, April 7, 2010**.

Sincerely,



Kirsten E. Gillibrand
United States Senator

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

April 7, 2010

The Honorable Tom Harkin, Chairman
The Honorable Thad Cochran, Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Labor, HHS, Education and Related Agencies
131 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Harkin & Ranking Member Cochran,

We are writing to request that you restore \$295 million in funding for state grants administered by the Office of Safe and Drug Free Schools at the Department of Education in the 2011 Labor-HHS Appropriations Bill. This grant program was eliminated in FY 2010.

School budgets are stretched thin across the United States, and restoring this funding will provide much-needed assistance to our local communities. The state grants administered through Safe and Drug Free Schools have historically provided critical funding for local schools to address the needs of students who are at risk of becoming drug users. As a result of the cuts to these grants, many schools will be forced to cut counseling and other programs that have been effective in providing support to young people who are vulnerable to the influence of illegal drugs and gang activity.

Drug abuse continues to pose a significant risk to school aged populations across the United States, and statistics speak to the urgent need for continued anti-drug education. According to statistical information in the 2009 National Drug Threat Assessment, young adults make up the largest percentage of cocaine users, and less than half of twelfth graders view trying cocaine as posing a great risk or harm. Particularly troubling is the rise of prescription drug abuse by teens and young adults. According to a January 2008 report issued by the Office of National Drug Control Policy, prescription drugs are second only to marijuana in rate of abuse by teens and one third of new prescription drug abusers in 2006 were aged 12-17. Moreover, 40 percent of teens believe that prescription drugs are safer than other illicit drugs and nearly thirty percent believe that they are not addictive.

We understand the need to ensure that federal funding is structured to maximize effectiveness, however we are also acutely aware of how critically important it is for communities across the country to be able to access adequate funding to stop drug abuse at the school door.

Thank you for your attention to this issue, which is critical to millions of our constituents. We hope that you will strongly consider this request.

Sincerely,

Kirsten E. Gillibrand