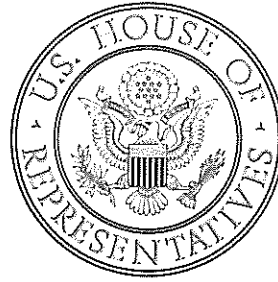


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UNITED STATES GROUP OF THE
NATO PARLIAMENTARY ASSEMBLY

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CONGRESSMAN KENDRICK B. MEEK

April 21, 2009

Governor Charlie Crist
The Capitol
Tallahassee, FL 32399-0001

Dear Governor Crist,

Yesterday, Joanne McCall, Vice President of the Florida Education Association and I met with U.S. Department of Education Secretary Arne Duncan to discuss the issue of Florida's education stimulus dollars and the waiver Florida is expected to need to be eligible for those dollars. I shared with him the understanding that had been relayed to me through numerous conversations and news articles; that Florida was awaiting guidelines and guidance from the U.S. Department of Education in order to apply for that waiver. Secretary Duncan surprised me by saying that the Department of Education was awaiting Florida's initial application for the stimulus dollars.

California, a state in even worse economic straights than Florida, has not only completed and submitted its application, but it has been reviewed and they have received \$3.2 billion in stimulus dollars for their education programs. South Dakota and Illinois have also completed the process and received their funding.

High ranking members of the Secretary's staff who sat in on the meeting, as well as the Secretary himself, are anxiously awaiting Florida's application, have had several conversations with members of your office and the Florida Department of Education, and are sympathetic to the challenges that Florida is facing in terms of budget shortfalls and cuts. They are inviting Florida to not only submit a DRAFT application, but are standing by to walk state education officials through the process before the application is finalized, as they have offered every state that has been awarded money thus far.

I voted for the passage of the stimulus bill based in part on the education dollars that Florida would receive. I know that Florida schools are in dire need of these monies, and that schools' reserve funds are depleted. Without these dollars, the educational gains that Florida has made over the last few years will be lost to us as teachers are laid off, programs cut, and schools closed. Every moment that is lost to inaction in the waning days of the legislative session further ties the hands of school district administrators.

In order to ensure that Florida receives the full benefit of education funds in the stimulus package, I strongly urge you to direct the Florida Department of Education to immediately begin preparation of Florida's Application for Initial Funding under the State Fiscal Stabilization Fund Program. I would also strongly advise that the State accept the Secretary's offer of counsel throughout the application process. No determination can be made on Florida's needs until the application is received in some form by the Department. I can tell you without equivocation that Secretary Duncan and his staff are eagerly awaiting Florida's application as there is no desire to exclude any state from economic stimulus. I understand that thousands of educators could be laid off in Florida without these dollars, and thus the sense of urgency is great.

Please do not hesitate to call me if you have any questions about the meeting.

Sincerely,



KENDRICK B. MEEK
Member of Congress

CC: Eric Smith, *Commissioner, Florida Department of Education*
Senator Jeff Atwater, *President of the Florida Senate*
Rep. Larry Cretul, *Speaker of the Florida House of Representatives*
Andy Hall, *President, Florida Education Association*
Beverly Slough, *President, Florida School Board Association*
Karin Brown, *President, Florida PTA*
Dr. Margaret Smith, *President, Florida Association of District School Superintendents*
A.J. Meyer, *Chairman, Florida Student Association*