

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

October 11, 2011

The Honorable Chris Lu
Cabinet Secretary
Co-Chair
White House Initiative on Asian Americans
and Pacific Islanders
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW
Washington, DC 20500

The Honorable Arne Duncan
Secretary of Education
Co-Chair
White House Initiative on Asian Americans
and Pacific Islanders
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW
Washington, DC 20500

Dear Cabinet Secretary Lu and Secretary Duncan:

We are writing to you, the co-chairs of the White House Initiative on Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders (WHIAAPI), seeking assistance for underserved Asian and Pacific Islander American students living in the U.S. Insular Areas. As you know, the mission of the WHIAAPI includes “the development, monitoring, and coordination of executive branch efforts to improve the quality of life of AAPIs through increased participation in Federal programs in which such persons may be underserved.” We find that such an inequity exists in the funding practices under the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 (ESEA).

Title I of ESEA – Improving the academic achievement of the disadvantaged, is the primary source of federal aid to K-12 education. Under Title I, schools in disadvantaged areas are entitled to federal aid to help them set and meet standards, keep up facilities, and pay teachers and staff. The Northern Mariana Islands, American Samoa, Guam, and the U.S. Virgin Islands collectively referred to as “outlying areas” in ESEA, currently receive a statutory funding set-aside of one percent under ESEA Sec. 1121, which they share with the Bureau of Indian Education (BIE) schools. Allocation among these groups is determined by the Secretary of Education, with roughly 75% of this set-aside going to BIE schools, leaving the remaining 25% to be split among the four outlying areas. As a result, Title I funding for school districts in the 50 states and DC is over \$3,100 per student; BIE schools receive \$2,300 per student; while the outlying areas get just over \$400 per student. While these set-asides were originally intended to ensure that each jurisdiction receives a minimum amount of funding to run a meaningful program, the small reservation actually gives each outlying area far less money than it would receive if its allocation was calculated under the regular state formula.

We appreciate the need to keep costs down, especially given the tough economic and political climate. However, we also believe that all students throughout the country should be allowed to compete on the same level. In an effort to foster equity, opportunity, and reform, and to further close the achievement gap for all students, we introduced legislation, H.R. 2430, to increase the annual amount of ESEA Title I funding allocated to the Northern Mariana Islands, American Samoa, Guam, and the U.S. Virgin Islands. This bill would reserve 0.5% of Title I program funding solely for the outlying areas, and 0.75% for BIE schools.

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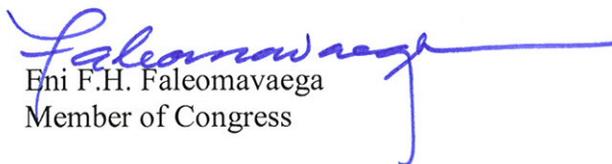
An increase in educational funding for disadvantaged students will significantly help Asian and Pacific Islander Americans in the outlying areas. We respectfully request that WHIAAPI assist in this effort by including an increase in ESEA Title I funding for the outlying areas as a policy recommendation to the President, promoting the Initiative's mission to improve the quality of life of underserved Asian and Pacific Islander Americans.

Thank you for your timely attention and consideration in this matter.

Sincerely,



Gregorio Kilili Camacho Sablan
Member of Congress



Eni F.H. Faleomavaega
Member of Congress



Madeleine Z. Bordallo
Member of Congress

cc: Ms. Kiran Ahuja, Executive Director, WHIAAPI
Debra Tudela Cabrera, Member, President's Advisory Commission
on Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders