EXECUTIVE OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT
OFFICE OF MANAGEMENT AND BUDGET
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20503

October 12, 1999
(Senate)

STATEMENT OF ADMINISTRATION POLICY

(THIS STATEMENT HAS BEEN COORDINATED BY OMB WITH THE CONCERNED AGENCIES.)

H.R. 974 - District of Columbia College Access Act
(Rep. Davis (R) VA and 13 cosponsors)

The Administration supports Senate passage of H.R. 974, as reported by the Senate Committee on Governmental Affairs. H.R. 974 would increase access to postsecondary education for residents of the District of Columbia (D.C.). While the Administration is extremely pleased with the strong bipartisan spirit in which H.R. 974 has been developed, the Administration continues to be concerned about the phase-in of student eligibility, and urges the Senate to amend H.R. 974 to address this concern. The Administration understands that the bill may be amended to alleviate this and other concerns.

The President's FY 2000 Budget includes $17 million to improve access to postsecondary education for D.C. residents. Currently, residents of all 50 states are served by multiple public colleges or universities, while D.C. residents are not. This unduly restricts their postsecondary opportunities. The Administration is pleased that H.R. 974 would: (1) allow the Federal Government to pay the difference between in-State and out-of-State tuition at public colleges and universities in Maryland and Virginia (and in other States under certain circumstances) on behalf of qualified D.C. residents; (2) provide grants to D.C. residents who choose to attend private colleges and universities in the Washington, D.C. area; and (3) authorize financial support to the University of the District of Columbia (UDC).

The Administration is concerned about the provision of the bill as reported that would restrict its benefits to only those students who graduated from secondary school or received the equivalent of a secondary school diploma on or after January 1, 1999. The Administration understands that the bill may be amended to provide benefits to students who graduated on or after January 1, 1998. The Administration urges adoption of this amendment. Limiting benefits to graduates after January 1, 1999, would be problematic for two reasons:

- It would unnecessarily limit eligibility. The Administration anticipates that resources will be available to fully fund the benefits to students who graduated <u>before</u> January 1, 1999, and could help many D.C. residents currently in college obtain their degrees. A lack of financial resources is a leading reason why many students who enroll in college do not complete their degree programs.

- It could distort the program and make it prohibitively expensive in the future. Because so few students would be initially eligible under the bill, the low initial program costs could result in pressure to prematurely expand the program to include grants for students to attend institutions in States other than Maryland and Virginia. Many more students would be eligible to receive these grants if the geographic scope of the program were expanded, and serious funding constraints and reduced benefits would be likely if the program were expanded before student eligibility is fully phased in. It is very important that students who begin attending postsecondary institutions outside of D.C. be assured of continuing, unreduced benefits.

The Administration is pleased that the reported version of H.R. 974 includes the authority for the Mayor of the District of Columbia to, in the event of insufficient appropriations, adjust the amount of tuition payments based on the financial need of eligible students. The Administration would prefer that H.R. 974 ensure that Federal resources are provided to those students with the greatest need for financial assistance by including some form of priority funding mechanism. The Administration notes, however, that the provision in the reported version of H.R. 974 is a step in the right direction. The Administration understands that the bill may be amended to authorize the Mayor, when administering the program, to give priority to students with the greatest financial need. The Administration urges adoption of this amendment.

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EXECUTIVE OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT
OFFICE OF MANAGEMENT AND BUDGET
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20503

October 20, 1999 (SENT)
(House)

STATEMENT OF ADMINISTRATION POLICY

(THIS STATEMENT HAS BEEN COORDINATED BY OMB WITH THE CONCERNED AGENCIES.)

<u>H.R. 2 - The Students Results Act of 1999</u>
(Rep. Goodling (R) PA and 18 others)

The Administration supports House passage of H.R. 2, as reported by the Committee on Education and the Workforce, but strongly urges that the bill be improved as outlined below.

The Administration is pleased that the Committee worked in a bipartisan manner and that H.R. 2 reflects some of the themes that shaped the President's Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) reauthorization proposal, the Educational Excellence for All Children Act of 1999. The Administration is encouraged that the Committee-reported version of H.R. 2 continues the work of standards-based reform, emphasizes public school choice, recognizes the importance of accountability, and rejects the false promise of vouchers. The Administration strongly opposes pending amendments to permit Title I funds to be used for private school vouchers, as well as amendments that would curtail necessary efforts by the Department of Education to protect the civil rights of children with limited English proficiency.

The Administration encourages the Congress to improve specific aspects of the legislation as the reauthorization process moves forward. Specifically, the Administration looks forward to working with the Congress to amend the bill to:

-- <u>Target funds to areas of greatest need</u> by concentrating Title I funds on high-poverty districts and schools that have the greatest need for funds and the farthest to go to raise student achievement. The bill should thus be amended to devote substantially more funds to Targeted Grants and less funds to Basic Grants. In addition, the House should delete language that would guarantee the award of Concentration Grants to districts for four years after they lose their eligibility. Finally, the bill should be amended to adopt the President's proposal to determine the Basic Grant allocation for Puerto Rico on the same basis as is used for the rest of the country.

-- <u>Ensure that children with limited English proficiency (LEP) are able to meet State standards for all children</u>. To support our continued commitment to improving parental involvement in the education of students with limited English proficiency, the bill should require that schools annually assess the English proficiency of LEP children in their Title I programs. Results would be used both to improve instruction and inform parents of student progress. In addition, the House should delete any provisions of the bill that would require parental consent for certain Title I services and jeopardize student access to the full benefit of Title I and opportunities to achieve to high standards.

The House should also include provisions from the President's proposal that would require States to use tests written in Spanish when testing Spanish-speaking students in subjects other than English, if Spanish-language tests are more likely to yield accurate and reliable information on what these students know in those subjects. This will help ensure that States, school districts, and schools are accountable for the academic performance of children with limited English proficiency. Similarly, to ensure accountability for helping students learn English, States should be required to include LEP students in State assessments of reading/language arts in English, when students have been in U.S. public schools for three or more consecutive years. Finally, the bill should require that tests used to assess the literacy level of first graders be in the language most likely to yield valid results.

-- Retain the current eligibility requirements for school-wide programs. Currently, schools with 50 percent of their students from low-income families can use their Title I funds for school-wide programs. H.R. 2 would lower the threshold to 40 percent. A threshold lower than 50 percent is likely to dilute the effect of Title I services for disadvantaged students in the school.

-- Strengthen accountability by including the President's proposal that each State set aside 2.5 percent of its annual Title I allocation to help turn around the lowest-performing schools. The bill should also be amended to promote single Statewide accountability systems, that would be effective immediately, to help ensure that all schools, including Title I schools, help students learn to the same high standards. By establishing potentially unworkable performance requirements solely for Title I schools, H.R. 2 would lead States to develop dual accountability systems -- one for Title I schools and another for all other schools. Moreover, because even the best State accountability systems today do not meet the requirements the bill would impose on Title I schools, the procedures required by the bill would cause significant delays in implementing effective district and school accountability. The States have already been given several years to implement accountability systems, and students in low-performing schools should not have to wait for further improvements.

-- Improve the quality of Title I instruction by incorporating the President's proposals to ensure that Title I teachers and paraprofessionals are fully trained and qualified, and substantially curtail the use of paraprofessionals to provide instructional services. The bill should also require school districts to devote at least five percent of their annual Title I allocations to provide high-quality professional development for teachers, principals, and other school staff.

-- Strengthen provisions on "comparability". The bill should include the President's proposal to strengthen current "comparability" provisions to ensure that disadvantaged children in Title I schools have access to the same quality of instruction and other resources as do children in other schools.

-- Reauthorize the Women's Educational Equity Act, as proposed by the President, in order to continue the national commitment to promote gender equity in education. This reauthorization is important to ensure that all women and girls have full and equal access to all educational and career opportunities. Increasing numbers of school districts are seeking materials and technical assistance related to gender equity, and the President's proposal would help meet those growing demands.

The Administration is pleased that the Committee included the President's proposed demonstration program that would provide support for high-quality public school choice initiatives. The bill should also reauthorize education programs for Native Hawaiians and adopt amendments to provide the additional flexibility proposed by the President to simplify and streamline these programs, which address the special educational obstacles that Native Hawaiians face. H.R. 2 should not include the new (and unworkable) program focused on rural areas. It is unlikely that the proposal would achieve its apparent objective of reducing administrative burdens or increasing flexibility for rural districts. The Administration looks forward to working with the Congress to address the education needs of rural areas.

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