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THE WHITE HOUSE

OFFICE OF LEGISLATIVE AFFAIRS

FAX COVER SHEET

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DATE:

10/21/99

TO:

Cathy Mays
DPC

FAX:

6-2878

FROM:

COURTNEY CROUCH

✓ DEVAN PATEL

456-7500 (TEL)

456-6221 (FAX)

RE:

Rangel letter - F&F

(Will be formally tasked to
DPC for response)Barbara
(for AK)

PAGE 1 OF

5

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CHARLES D. RANGEL

15TH CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

NEW YORK

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DATE: 10/19/99

FROM: Rep. Charles Rangel, Carney

TO: Lawrence Stein

FAX:

NUMBER OF PAGES (INCLUDING COVER):

SUBJECT/MESSAGE:



HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20515

October 18, 1999

The Honorable William Clinton
President of the United States
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW
Washington, DC 20502

Dear President Clinton:

Our nation's young people have a big stake in the future of America, but many of our children are not being provided with adequate educational opportunities that will allow them to take advantage of the prosperity and promise of the new global economy. Tragically, an entire generation of poor urban and rural children, many minority and undereducated, are missing out on the American dream. At the time of unprecedented economic growth in this country these children are being left behind. Where is our outrage? Where is America's outrage? These children deserve better.

Investment in public education is the key to developing young minds and giving all of America's children a chance to excel. At the present time, however, a significant number of young people attend schools where facilities are crumbling, classrooms are overcrowded, students are without computers and Internet access, and many teachers are uncertified and underqualified. While there are many dedicated teachers and great public schools in this country, it is a shame when even one child in the United States receives an obsolete and inadequate education.

The situation is bleak for those who find themselves dropping out of or graduating from low-performing schools. Many of these young people are doomed to experience the negative effects of illiteracy, joblessness, premature pregnancies, drug abuse, and gun violence. There are 1.8 million young men and women incarcerated in America. Most are poor, most are minority, and all are undereducated. Why do we spend \$84,000 per year to keep someone incarcerated, and only \$9,000 per year to educate him or her? We believe that it makes the most sense to give people the tools they need to compete before they end up in jail or on the street.

President Clinton
October 18, 1999
Page Two

Under the guise of promoting increased competition in education, some argue that failing schools should be forced to improve by starving them of resources. This approach undermines our public school system by failing to provide disadvantaged students and schools, many of whom are already resource deprived, with the extra nurturing and resources that they need to achieve significant reform.

We must develop and implement strategies to provide all young men and women in school with core academic competencies geared toward world-class standards which will prepare them for career opportunities in the more competitive global economy. This can be accomplished by providing targeted assistance to low-performing schools so that they can develop and adopt reform plans that include challenging curricula, highly-qualified teachers, and higher expectations that make achievement possible.

As educators, administrators, union representatives, parents, business leaders, public officials, and representatives from education, faith, and community-based organizations from across the country, we represent a broad cross-section of concerned citizens interested in embarking on a national campaign to preserve and strengthen our public schools. We intend to pursue a comprehensive, needs based strategy at the federal level to ensure that schools that have been determined to be failing/underperforming are provided with direct federal resources to close the funding and achievement gaps.

The federal government must take every step it can to help create a level playing field for all of our nation's students, especially those who live in high need areas. The efforts of the federal government must be coordinated by your administration so that resources can be maximized and the nation's attention focused on this important issue. We need your leadership and that of Vice President Gore so that we can make an ideal—the transformation of every disadvantaged urban and rural school in America into a center of educational excellence—a reality.

Towards this goal, we would like to request a White House meeting on this issue to be attended by a wide range of people who have a stake in ensuring the success of America's public school system. The purpose of this meeting is two-fold: 1) to start a national dialogue focusing on the inequities in the funding and quality of public education available to America's poorest urban and rural children; and, 2) to establish a consensus on a plan of action to address the problems of poor and under-performing public schools.

President Clinton
October 18, 1999
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There is no question that public education has helped make the U.S. the world leader that it is today. It must be our nation's priority to radically reform poor performing public schools if we are to ensure a successful future for our children and our country.

Sincerely,

Charles B. Rangel
Hugh Price/Urban League
Michael Casserly, Council of Great City Schools
National Alliance of Black School Educators
Board of Education of the City of New York/Chancellor Crew
Princeton Training Associates, Ted Gershon
Wellington Webb, U.S. Council of Mayors
American Association of School Administrators
National Association of Secondary School Principals

cc: Vice President Al Gore
First Lady Hillary Rodham Clinton
John Podesta
Larry Stein
Gene Sperling
Richard Riley

Congress of the United States

House of Representatives

Washington, DC 20515-3215

June 8, 1999

The Honorable William J. Clinton
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20502

Dear President Clinton:

Recent events make it clearer than ever that we must turn our attention and resources to address the needs of America's children. The school shootings in Colorado and Georgia have been a tragedy for the nation. It is terrible to have senseless acts of violence snuff out young lives before they truly begin. It is important that these incidents are not viewed in isolation. In schools across our nation, the lives of our young people are being cut short and their hopes and dreams deferred not only due to violence but also because of illiteracy, school drop outs, teen pregnancies, incarceration, and drug abuse. The widespread occurrence of these tragedies demonstrate that somewhere along the way many of our children have lost hope for the future.

The Administration has been quick to allocate America's resources to intercede in a tribal war thousands of miles from U.S. soil in the former Yugoslavia. It is hard to justify this policy when so many of our own children are in need of these critical resources. The severity of the issues facing our children should lead us to only one conclusion: we must first take care of our kids at home. No child living in the richest country in the world should live without hope for the future.

Investment in public education is the key to developing young minds and giving all of America's children a chance to excel. At the present time, however, some of our young people attend schools where facilities are crumbling, classrooms are overcrowded, students are without computer and internet access, and many teachers are uncertified and underqualified. It is a shame that the United States maintains a public education system that subjects some of its students to a poor quality of education—in effect, dooming them to a future that is bypassed by the prosperity and promise of the new global economy.

Tragically, the young people who are most likely to be subjected to an inferior education in this system are those who attend school in urban and rural areas with high rates of poverty and those who are of African American and Hispanic descent. In a country that prides itself on its leadership in world affairs, the negative effects of race and income continue to have a pervasive impact on the quality of education and the life's chances of affected students. These educational disparities are a national disgrace and must be addressed.

Statistics show that one out of every two black men in the District of Columbia are in jail; and one out of every three in the country are incarcerated. There are 1.8 million young men and women incarcerated in America. Most are poor, most are minority, many are addicted to drugs, and all are undereducated. Seventy percent of prison inmates do not possess basic literacy skills. Why do we spend \$84,000 per year to keep someone incarcerated but only \$9,000 per year to educate him or her? Wouldn't it make more sense to provide people with the tools they need to compete before they end up in jail or on the street? The U.S. must reassess its misplaced priorities and make a greater investment in its public education system so that all of America's children can receive a quality education that enables them to compete in the global economy of the 21st Century.

It should be made clear that, in general, America's public schools are in good shape. Our public schools continue to produce productive individuals who are prepared to take on the demands of higher education and the workforce upon graduation. This fact has not been lost on educators, union leaders and public officials from across the country who have acknowledged the value of our public school system:

- Sandra Feldman, President of the American Federation of Teachers: "America's most successful public service of any kind, the public schools, educate the great majority of our children, offer an avenue for upward mobility, and foster a sense of common purpose among our people."

- Dr. Rudolph Crew, New York Public Schools Chancellor: "I have chosen to make my commitment to public education, an American institution that has helped this country and its people grow and prosper for more than a century and an institution that should be given the support it needs to bring our nation and its people into the 21st century."
- Richard Daley, Mayor for the city of Chicago: "America's public schools are too valuable for us to lose for they are the foundation upon which this great nation has flourished."

Given that most of our public schools are fulfilling their educational mission, it would be foolish to throw out our entire public education system, as some have suggested, when there are only a few parts that need to be overhauled.

I, along with key educators, administrators, and public officials from across the country, stand ready and prepared to embark on a national campaign to reform and strengthen our public schools. We intend to pursue a comprehensive, needs based strategy at the federal level to ensure that schools that serve disadvantaged students are provided with additional federal resources to close the funding and achievement gaps. This comprehensive strategy is revolutionary and goes beyond the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, which attempts to establish accountability and performance measures without providing needy public schools with the means needed to achieve them.

Our plan includes targeting those areas where students are suffering from inadequate resources. In order to achieve optimal results, these targeted communities would be required to enter into a voluntary agreement that waives school district, union, and local and state government regulations as a precondition for receiving federal assistance for school reform. This plan embraces standard measures for increased performance, some of which you acknowledged in your State of the Union address, including the need to: modernize schools, raise standards, increase accountability, bring high quality teachers to the classroom, provide school report cards to parents, create smaller class sizes, and introduce innovative partnerships between schools, parents, and the private and nonprofit sectors.

The Honorable William J. Clinton

June 8, 1999

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Our plan also expands the concept of a national education initiative dedicated to attracting the best and brightest of our youth to teach in urban and rural schools. The program should be supplemented by a national college internship program designed to attract students from all majors to tutor, rehabilitate facilities, introduce technology, and mentor students.

It is imperative that we develop a new paradigm to keep kids in school and provide a solid educational foundation, world class academic skills, industry responsive job training and preparation for post-secondary education and life-long learning. The efforts of the federal government must be coordinated by your office in order to maximize our resources, and focus the nation's attention on this issue.

You have recently embarked on a new initiative to focus federal resources in those areas of the country that have been underdeveloped in terms of business opportunities. It is important to recognize, however, that this "new markets" initiative cannot thrive without also nurturing the underdeveloped human talent in these distressed areas. We must have new minds for new markets if we are serious about truly improving the conditions of poor communities throughout America.

Due to a strong economy and budget surpluses, the U.S. now has a unique opportunity and strong incentive to invest in its human capital. If we are to maintain and enhance our status as a world leader, the federal government must continue to promote activities that ensure economic vitality, personal security, and expanded opportunity for all Americans into the 21st Century.

I would appreciate the opportunity to meet with you as soon as possible so that I can provide you with more details about my plan to reform low achieving schools. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,



Charles B. Rangel
—Member of Congress

CBR:mmr

cc: Richard Riley
John Podesta
Larry Stein
Jack Lew
Gene Sperling

Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515-3215

June 22, 1999

The Honorable William J. Clinton
President of the United States
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20502

Dear President Clinton:

Since I last wrote to you about the state of American public education and the necessity to improve upon the system to meet the needs of all of our children, other prominent leaders from the public and private sector have commanded national attention with remarks that relay similar observations and conclusions.

In his recent statements before the Joint Economic Committee, Federal Reserve Board Chairman Alan Greenspan, highlighted the need for an increased focus on our education system. Remarking that the U.S. falls "far short" in grades K through 12, Greenspan stated that he was "hard-pressed to see how we can maintain what is increasingly an intellectual-based output system if there is a significant proportion of our working groups are unable to have insight into that process."

Greenspan was not alone in his concerns. IBM Chairman Louis Gerstner noted the "deplorable condition of our system of public education" and our lack of competitiveness when compared with the other nations of the world. He predicted, "unless we arrest the wasting decline of our public schools--and do it now--America is destined to be an also-ran in the emerging digital economy." Both Greenspan and Gerstner's remarks illustrate that investment in public education is not only the key to developing young minds and giving all of America's children a chance to excel, it is the key to America's economic future.

The Honorable William J. Clinton

June 22, 1999

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It is becoming increasingly clear to many across the country that some parts of our current education system are producing students who come out of high school with a knowledge base that is incomplete or obsolete. Some schools produce graduates ill-equipped to compete in an increasingly fast-paced, knowledge-based, technological world. It is deplorable that some of our young people, many of whom are minorities in poor urban areas, are doomed to failure because they attend resource-poor schools where facilities are crumbling, classrooms are overcrowded, students are without computer and internet access, and many teachers are uncertified and underqualified.

Failing students in poor communities are almost sure to face high rates of illiteracy, incarceration, joblessness, and drug abuse. Since 1970, the prison population has increased from 260,000 to 1.8 million people in 1997 (nearly a 600% increase). Studies indicate that 70% of inmates lack basic literacy skills, 49% have not completed high school, more than 70% used illegal drugs one month prior to their arrest, and 40% in state prisons lived below the poverty level prior to incarceration. It is important to realize that these incarcerated individuals are not born criminals. Many are the product of failed support systems, including schools that have neglected to provide them with the proper tools to compete and excel in today's society. It is unacceptable that some of our children are locked up with no hope for the future in the richest, most powerful country in the world. This is a waste of talent and productivity.

Now that the war in Kosovo has ended, it is time to declare a war much closer to home--one of great significance to national security and to the economic and social stability of our nation. America's new "war" at home should be a national initiative to reform failing public schools. The remarks of Greenspan, Gerstner, Denver Mayor Wellington Webb, Vice President Gore and many others signify that many knowledgeable and influential Americans are recognizing the need to focus our attention on this effort.

Contrary to what some claim, the answer is not to throw out the entire public education system when only a few parts are dysfunctional. The U.S. must focus on turning disadvantaged schools inside out so that they can be transformed into model schools where students can learn in a positive and affirming environment. This effort requires a serious commitment from the federal government with substantial cooperation from local and state government, teachers unions, parents, and businesses. Serious school reform would entail providing better teacher training, more effective curricula,

The Honorable William J. Clinton

June 22, 1999

Page 3

improved access to new technologies, refurbished or new facilities, smaller class sizes and innovative partnerships between schools, businesses and communities.

As a community, we should establish strong expectations for student performance based on academic literacy, social competency, civic responsibility, occupational opportunity, and technical proficiency. Additionally, these expectations should be aligned with the needs of the U.S. economy so that we can continue to produce strong economic growth. Investment in public education is the key to developing young minds and giving all of America's children a chance to excel.

I urge you to establish a task force on public education to study these reform measures and others as a means to address the funding and achievement gaps among America's poorest urban and rural school districts. This task force should include individuals representing teachers, parents, school administrators, public officials, communities and businesses. In addition, I am asking you to initiate a national conference designed to help the country focus on this important issue. It is important that the conference be limited to discussions about rejuvenating and redefining the public education system--not by entertaining schemes that divert resources from it--but by using innovative techniques that can enhance and strengthen the current system.

There is no reason why a country possessing the genius and talent to develop the internet, create innovative computers and software, and generate enough produce to feed the world, cannot successfully reform its own public education system. We have the know-how and expertise, now we need the willpower and commitment.

Democrats have defended the public education system on the premise that education should be universally available so that the talents of all children can be developed and nourished for the betterment of society. Our defense of the system, however, does not mean that we accept the parts that do not work. I stand alongside many others who are ready to reform those schools that fail to provide our children with a decent education.

The Honorable William J. Clinton

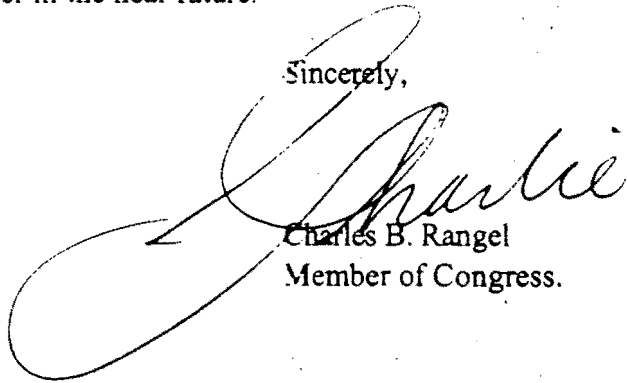
June 22, 1999

Page 4

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Thank you for your time and consideration. I look forward to talking with you further about this matter in the near future.

Sincerely,

A large, stylized handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Charlie".

Charles B. Rangel
Member of Congress.

CBR:mmr



HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
WASHINGTON, D. C. 20515

OCT 20 PM12:19

October 18, 1999

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10/18/99 10E 14:12 FAX 202 456 0425
10/19/99 11:08 FAX
President Clinton
October 18, 1999
Page Two

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CHARLES B. RANGEL

15TH CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT
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TO: Lawrence Stein

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