March 25, 2004

The Honorable Christopher Bond
Chairman, VA, HUD & Independent Agencies Subcommittee
Committee on Appropriations
SD-130 Dirksen Senate Office Building
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Mr. Chairman:

We encourage you to continue the federal commitment to math and science education by maintaining the peer-reviewed Math and Science Partnerships (MSPs) at the National Science Foundation (NSF) and supporting robust funding for both the U.S. Department of Education (ED) and the NSF Math and Science Partnership programs.

We urge you to oppose the Administration's budget proposal that would phase-out the NSF MSP program and establish a new federal grant administered by the Secretary of Education that would, in effect, limit individual states' discretion to target much-needed funds for local science and mathematics education reforms.

We believe that the MSPs at both the Department of Education and at NSF are necessary and complementary. Without one, the other is significantly weakened.

The competitive, peer-reviewed, NSF MSPs seek to develop scientifically sound, model, reform initiatives that will improve teacher quality, develop challenging curricula, and increase student achievement in mathematics and science. The funds appropriated under NCLB for the ED MSPs go directly to the states as formula grants, providing funds to all states to replicate and implement these initiatives throughout the country.

While we support the Administration’s proposal to increase funding for the ED MSPs, we oppose the creation of a new $120 million ED grant program that runs counter to congressional intent by focusing only on math and reducing state flexibility to target funds to areas of greatest need. We encourage you to oppose new restrictions on the additional funding slotted for the state-based ED MSPs.

In summary, we strongly urge Congress to: 1) reject the Administration's proposed phase-out of the NSF MSP program; 2) oppose additional restrictions to the ED MSP program; and, 3) provide robust funding for both MSP programs.

If you have any questions, please contact Heather Hill at 202.872.4467 or Patti Curtis at 202.785.7385.