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April 7, 2014

U.S. Congress  
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Congress:

On behalf of the League of United Latin American Citizens, the nation's oldest and largest civil rights organization, I urge you to support President Obama's proposal for a new Race to the Top competition for Equity and Opportunity (RTT-Equity and Opportunity) and include it in the FY 2015 Labor-HHS-Education Appropriations bill.

This new program will advance equity and opportunity by supporting states and districts in identifying and closing educational opportunity and achievement gaps and ensuring that all students—particularly those with the highest needs—graduate from high school, college, and be career-ready. Some initiatives will include: resource adequacy and comparability; strong teachers and leaders; reduction in concentrated poverty and segregation; access to rigorous coursework and AP classes; school climate and fair discipline policies; and student supports like expanded learning time, improved school safety and climate, and capacity to address social and mental health needs.

Today, millions of Black and Brown young people remain consigned to a school system that is separate, unequal, and inadequate. Low-income and minority students are suspended, expelled, and susceptible to higher dropout rates compared to their peers, and are less likely to have access to strong teachers or challenging curriculums. A study by the U.S. Department of Education found that 45 percent of high-poverty schools received state and local funds below what was typical for other schools in their district. Minority students and students from low-income families attend and complete college at far lower rates than other students.

The appropriation of \$300 million for RTT-Opportunity competitive fund will produce new substantiation about what practices, policies, and systematic improvements work to eliminate many of these intolerable disparities. With this data, it will be in the national interest to find ways to ensure that all schools and districts learn from and realize the same successes that we are confident the new RTT-Opportunity winners will experience.

Sincerely,

Margaret Moran  
LULAC National President