

ROBERT P. CASEY, JR.
PENNSYLVANIA

COMMITTEES:
AGRICULTURE, NUTRITION,
AND FORESTRY
FOREIGN RELATIONS
HEALTH, EDUCATION,
LABOR, AND PENSIONS
SPECIAL COMMITTEE ON AGING
JOINT ECONOMIC

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

June 17, 2009

Dear Senator:

This year, I know that the General Assembly and Governor Rendell face a difficult challenge in reaching agreement on a balanced state budget that adequately addresses the needs of Pennsylvanians during this time of economic hardship for our Commonwealth and our country.

Recognizing that state governments across the nation faced such challenges, President Obama and Congress included significant funding in the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) to help states stabilize their fiscal situations while making major investments in public education, early learning, and child care, as well as health care and supplemental nutrition programs.

I believe that every child is born with a light shining within. It is the obligation of every public official to make sure that *every child* reaches his or her full potential—ensuring that that light will shine ever brightly. I believe that, as an elected official, I must do all I can to help make it possible for every child, especially in the dawn of their life, to have the benefit of quality health care, nutrition, and early learning. That is why I introduced the Prepare All Kids Act for pre-K education so kids can learn more now and earn more in the years ahead. And it is why I voted for ARRA, which is directing an estimated \$2.5 billion to Pennsylvania for public schools, tuition assistance, and other investments in our children's future. That funding gives Pennsylvania new resources during this period of economic distress to avert teacher layoffs, maintain special education programs, continue investments in pre-school opportunities, and prepare our young people to compete in the 21st century economy.

So as you deliberate and make decisions regarding the Fiscal Year 2009-2010 state budget, please keep in mind the importance of continuing investments in our children, including funding for our public schools.

I understand that there is some support in Harrisburg for cutting state funding for public schools and filling that hole with more than \$700 million in federal funding from ARRA. However, the intent of President Obama and Congress in passing that law was to help get the economy out of the ditch and also to *reinvest* in our future to pave the way for long-term economic growth. As you know, one of the best paths to economic strength is building a strong future workforce through quality education. That is why the federal law was not the “American Recovery Act,” but the “American Recovery and Reinvestment Act.”

Merely swapping state dollars for federal funds, with no new investment, will slow progress toward better schools and force many local school districts into program cuts or higher local taxes. At a time when our economy is in trouble, we must not cut our investments in our schools and in our kids. We do not want to stop progress now. We do not want to reverse the gains that we have made in Pennsylvania with our strong past commitment to public education, pre-kindergarten education, and children's health care. Instead, let's put the federal and state dollars to work as intended: to get our economy back on track and to invest in our children's - and our nation's - future.

I appreciate this opportunity to present my views on this matter of great importance to Pennsylvanians and their future. Thank you.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Bob Casey, Jr." in a cursive style.

Robert P. Casey, Jr.
United States Senator