

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

June 27, 2014

The Honorable Deborah S. Delisle
Assistant Secretary
U.S. Department of Education
400 Maryland Avenue, SW
Washington, DC 20202

Dear Assistant Secretary Delisle:

We ask for your consideration of the request from the Washington State Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) to waive the 14-day notice requirement for public school choice for the 2014-2015 school year. When we talk to the hardworking superintendents in Washington state, they express serious concern about the negative consequences of sending letters to parents that indicate their child's school is failing.

These letters will go to nearly every parent of a child enrolled in public school, because the flawed No Child Left Behind standards will designate almost every Washington school as failing. While the requirement's intent is to give parents the opportunity to transfer their child out of a failing school, if every school is failing, there will be no option to transfer. Therefore, the letters will simply damage the perception of public schools in the community.

School funding also is at stake, as Washington state schools depend on levy and bond funding. When voters receive letters saying schools are failing, schools may lose vital public support for these critical sources of funding. Additionally, letters to the community branding our schools as failures will discourage dedicated educators working hard to provide high quality public education.

These letters will have a particularly damaging impact on our schools that serve military families. Teachers and administrators work hard to maintain a positive relationship with servicemembers and their families. We are very concerned that letters designating schools as failing will create unnecessary stress for military families newly stationed in Washington state. It would be jarring for any family entering a new school to be told that the school is failing, and particularly so for military families who strive to keep their children's education consistent despite the disruption of frequent moves.

We appreciate your consideration and urge you to work with OSPI to promote the best interests of Washington state students, families, and educators.

Sincerely,



Patty Murray
United States Senator



Maria Cantwell
United States Senator



Rick Larsen
Member of Congress




Denny Heck
Member of Congress



Adam Smith
Member of Congress



Suzan DelBene
Member of Congress



Jim McDermott
Member of Congress



Derek Kilmer
Member of Congress