

June 6, 2002

Members of the Appropriations Committee
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator:

RE: FY2003 EDUCATION APPROPRIATIONS

On behalf of the Software & Information Industry Association (SIIA), the principal trade association of the software code and electronic content industry, I write to present recommendations for increased FY2003 federal investment in education and education technology. We were pleased that Congress and the Administration provided bipartisan support last year for a significant increase in education funding, and we look forward to working with you to further enhance this critical federal investment.

SIIA's 800 member high-tech companies develop and market software and electronic content for consumers, business, education, entertainment and the Internet. Many SIIA members partner with educators to provide education software tools and digital curriculum that improves teaching and learning, while all depend on the nation's schools for a skilled and productive high-tech workforce.

SIIA and our member companies believe technology is critical to meeting the nation's education goals, and that federal leadership and resources are essential to these efforts. SIIA therefore urges you to continue the recent bipartisan commitment to education in FY2003 by matching the double-digit percentage funding increases of recent years.

In particular, SIIA urges increased support for the following funding priorities:

- **Title II, Part D Enhancing Education Through Technology.** SIIA urges an increase from \$700 million to \$1 billion for this core federal technology investment, which has been enhanced and better targeted to disadvantaged communities through the NCLB Act. However, this program can only be as effective as the appropriations to meet the raised goals and expectations. The program was authorized at \$1 billion to recognize the shift to a state-to-local formula program; but the current \$700 million will leave some one-third of all districts with grants of less than \$5,000 (or only enough for just a few PCs).
- **Preparing Tomorrow's Teachers to Use Technology (PT3).** In the area of teacher quality, SIIA also urges restored funding of \$125 million for the PT3 program to ensure teacher training programs adequately prepare educators to effectively integrate technology into their instruction.
- **Other Core Federal Priorities.** SIIA recommends that additional increased investment is best targeted to the core federal program priorities of teacher quality and disadvantaged and special needs populations through Title I, Title II Teacher Quality, Mathematics and Science Partnerships, Title V Innovative Programs, IDEA special education and student financial aid.

From online distance education to individualized learning software with embedded diagnostic assessments, technology is helping transform the way we teach and learn and increasing student achievement. Technology is also critical to meeting educational efficiency and accountability goals, including for the purposes of assessment, parental involvement, teacher training, data management and data-driven decision making. In fact, many *No Child Left Behind Act* (NCLBA) goals and requirements can not be efficiently or effectively achieved without technology tools. For example, without distance learning technologies, the lack of providers within geographic proximity makes the new Title I supplemental services option impractical for students in many low-performing rural districts.

While great strides have been made in bringing technology and the Internet to the classroom, enhanced federal investment through Title II, Part D is necessary to ensure all communities have a sustained and stable source of funding to meet technology needs and goals. In fact, in contrast to the 7% average, U.S. Department of Education grant programs provide more than one-third of the resources K-12 schools have for technology. Targeted and stable federal support is also necessary, because technology is a unique local budget item: Technology is a relatively new item in a budget that is crafted at the margin and slow to change. It is a relatively expensive item in a budget that devotes most resources to personnel and operations. And technology is a hybrid item in a budget that categorizes costs as either capital or recurring expenses.

Increased federal investment is therefore necessary to ensure: (1) all students have access to modern technology infrastructure, high speed Internet and high-quality software and electronic content; (2) all teachers are proficient in the use of technology; and (3) technology is effectively integrated into teaching and learning to improve educational productivity and student achievement.

With too many teachers inadequately prepared to integrate technology, professional development is an especially critical federal role. The Preparing Tomorrow's Teachers to Use Technology (PT3) program is especially effective in targeting resources. PT3 leverages partnerships between districts and schools of education to infuse technology into teacher preparation and professional development. Too many students are entering teacher colleges enthused about technology but leaving without the teaching skills to integrate it into their instruction due to the antiquated ways of these teacher training institutions. As a result, we are losing the opportunity for this generation of new teachers to enter the classroom with the skills to use technology and modernize their teaching practice.

SIIA urges the federal government to not cede its leadership role in the area of technology. The *No Child Left Behind Act* is an important step toward improving the nation's elementary and secondary schools, but these goals and requirements can only be achieved if this federal leadership is matched by increased federal investment. In this time of state and local fiscal challenge, federal resources are more important than ever. Only by making education a top national investment priority can we address education's needs and demands.

The Software & Information Industry Association and its member high-tech companies look forward to working with you to achieve increased federal support for education and education technology and help address the nation's educational needs. If we can be of any further assistance, please do not hesitate to contact me or Mark Schneiderman, SIIA's Director of Education Policy, at 202-789-4444 or marks@siia.net.

**Software & Information
Industry Association**

1090 Vermont Ave NW Sixth Floor
Washington, DC 20005-4095



Sincerely,

Kenneth A. Wasch
President

Tel: +1.202.289.7442
Fax: +1.202.289.7097

www.siiia.net