



December 4, 2008

The Honorable Robert Byrd, Chairman
The Honorable David Obey, Chairman
The Honorable Tom Harkin, Chairman
Appropriations Committee
Washington, D.C.

Dear Chairmen Byrd, Obey and Harkin:

As the Appropriations Conference Committee considers the Omnibus FY 2009 budget bill, the National HEP/CAMP Association urges the committee to accept the House Subcommittee-approved appropriations levels for the High School Equivalency Program (HEP) and College Assistance Migrant Program (CAMP).

Farmworker migrant and seasonal worker students are some of the most disadvantaged and at-risk students. This student population has one of the highest dropout rates in the country. They encounter tremendous obstacles in completing high school and continuing on and succeeding in college. For over three decades, the **HEP/CAMP** programs have been successful in helping to close the access and completion gaps for many first generation low-income minority farmworker migrant and seasonal worker students particularly Latinos are served by these programs. The **HEP** grantees provide intensive GED instruction and support services to migrant students who have not completed high school. HEP provides personal, academic, vocational counseling, health services, stipends, and housing for residential programs. The **CAMP** grantees provide intensive support services to help migrant students make the transition into college. CAMP offers academic support, personal and career counseling, stipends, scholarships, health services, and other supports necessary to ensure that migrant students are successful in college.

After years of declining funding, the House Appropriations Subcommittee recommends a slight increase for HEP/CAMP for FY 2009 (HEP \$19.13 million and CAMP \$15.86 million for a total of \$35.17 million). The Senate Appropriations Committee proposes level funding for the HEP/ CAMP programs at FY2008 levels of \$18.22 million for HEP and \$15.10 million for CAMP for a total of \$33.32 million. As a result of a decrease level of funding since FY 2004, there has been an elimination of 20 HEP/CAMP programs in states with high farmworker migrant student populations. For example, Wisconsin and Florida had several CAMP programs for many years but currently have no CAMP programs. In FY 2004, there were 102 HEP/CAMP programs. Currently, there are only 82 programs. In FY 2009, the most experienced and successful HEP/CAMP programs are competing for five-year grants. If the Senate FY2009 budget levels are accepted, the Department of Education estimates that another 3 HEP and 3 CAMP programs will be eliminated in FY 2009 due to limited funding. If the House funding levels are accepted then several more much needed programs will be spared in FY 2009 and more farmworker migrants students will have an opportunity to pursue higher education.



Additionally, we would like to point out that the recently enacted Higher Education Opportunity Act (HEOA) recognizes the importance of HEP/CAMP programs by increasing the authorization for the programs jointly to \$75 million beginning this fiscal year, an increase of \$55 million. The combined funding levels of the House (\$35.17 million) and the Senate (\$33.32) do not come near the authorization level but we prefer the House appropriations levels as the first step toward full authorization levels.

We recognize that money is very limited during this time of economic crisis but this small increase for HEP/CAMP will ensure that several more programs will be funded in FY 2009 to provide opportunities for one of the most at-risk student populations who are in tremendous need of help and support to get their GED and pursue higher education. For these reasons, we are urging the Conference Committee to accept the House-Subcommittee approved levels for HEP/CAMP.

Should you have any questions or concerns, please contact me or the Association's Washington Representative Irene Bueno at ibueno@nvgllc.com or 202.778.0740.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Arturo Martinez, PhD
President

cc:

Members of the House and Senate Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human Services and Education
Members of the Congressional Hispanic Caucus