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July 22, 2011

The Honorable Gene Dodaro
Comptroller General
U.S. Government Accountability Office
441 G Street, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20548

Dear Mr. Dodaro:

Each year, states and school districts spend significant time and resources complying with regulatory requirements attached to the federal education dollars they receive from the U.S. Department of Education and other federal agencies. In 2008, the Department of Education estimated schools and school districts spent nearly 8 million hours working to meet the reporting requirements of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act's Title I Grants to Local Educational Agencies. In addition, past work by the Department of Education's Inspector General and Government Accountability Office (GAO) identified challenges associated with many federal requirements, which include multiple data requests from different federal education programs and a lack of focus on student and program performance.

This year, the Committee held several hearings to examine the consequences of federal, state, and local regulations on schools and school districts. The regulatory requirements attached to federal education dollars are an important part of informing policymakers and the public how educational goals are being achieved. However, they should not create an undue burden on schools and districts. The recent hearings on this issue have raised significant questions about the aggregate burden placed on states and school districts, and the extent to which the information being collected by the Department of Education is fully utilized. Local educational agencies (LEAs) consistently raised concerns regarding the amount of time and effort needed to comply with federal requirements, noting it diverts resources away from students and classrooms.

As the Committee continues to learn more about what can be done to alleviate the burden placed on states and school districts, we request GAO examine the following:

1. What are some of the most costly and challenging federal regulatory requirements placed on states and LEAs by federal agencies?

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2. What actions has the Department of Education taken to identify and alleviate burdensome or duplicative requirements for LEAs, and what barriers does the Department face in alleviating this burden?
3. What significant new or increased data collection requirements or other regulations has the Department of Education imposed on states and LEAs in recent years, and how have these requirements increased the burdens on states and school districts?
4. How does the Department of Education ensure that data provided through key data collections is used to improve its education planning and oversight, and what steps does the Department take to help teachers and school leaders use these data points to improve academic achievement for their students?

We appreciate your assistance in this matter. If you have questions concerning this request, please contact Mandy Schaumburg with the committee staff at 202-225-6558 or mandy.schaumburg@mail.house.gov.

Sincerely,



JOHN KLINE

Chairman

Committee on Education and the Workforce



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