

August 30, 2008

Senator Arlen Specter
711 Hart Senate Office Bldg.
Washington, DC 20510
ATTN: Jen Castagna

Dear Senator Specter,

I am writing to express my strong support for West Jefferson Hills School District's Appropriations request of \$500,000 in the House Commerce, Justice, and Science (CJS) Appropriations bill. The funding is for the establishment of a District Alternative Education Program that will provide quality services for students who have been identified as "at risk" and have not been able to comply with the established rules and regulations of the traditional classroom.

As you know, our Congressman, Tim Murphy, was able to secure funding for this worthwhile project in the House CJS bill and I am requesting that you ask the Senate to accept this funding when the bill goes to conference.

This District Alternative Education Program (DAEP) will provide educational services, counseling services and guidance services to students through grades 6-12. These students will be those children that are identified as potentially "at risk" students by the professional staff of the West Jefferson Hills School District. "At risk" students would be those students who are or have committed: 1) at risk of dropping out; 2) numerous policy violations; 3) chronic disciplinary infractions; 4) chronic truancy; 5) drug /alcohol violations or; 6) weapons violations and are 45-day placements.

The primary goal of this program will be twofold: first, to offer to the student the opportunity to continue receiving an appropriate education, eventually leading to the successful acquisition of a high school diploma and; second, to offer the student the opportunity to become a productive member of the community through vocational programming and work experience opportunities. Currently, the District has approximately 25 students that are in school placements outside of the District. These children have been identified as "at risk." The District would use the funds to purchase specific equipment such as technology, curriculum materials, procure an appropriate location, provide staffing, including highly qualified regular and special education teachers, administrative staff, non-professional support staff, and to contract for mental health supports.

This program would be used as a last resort for students who have demonstrated an inability to function in the regular educational environment. To ensure that they receive a quality education, the District will operate this alternative program as a mirror program of the District High School program. Students would participate in an educational program that is designed to offer a quality education, have the opportunity to participate in individual counseling, have the opportunity to participate in the local vocational school or have the opportunity to participate in a work release program.

The West Jefferson Hills School District has never actively sought federal funding before. However, with the rising costs of school construction and other needed improvements, we find that our needs are outweighing our resources. We ask that you join us in strongly supporting our request for funding this important, life-changing project.

Sincerely,

Signature _____

Address _____

City State Zip _____

Affiliation _____

Parent/ Teacher/Community Member