

Rep Honda's Educational Equity Commission Releases Report on Each and Every Child

Written by Mike Honda

Tuesday, 19 February 2013 00:00

WASHINGTON DC - Today, Rep Michael Honda's national educational equity commission, legislation he originally authored in Congress, issued its groundbreaking report "[For Each and Every Child](#)". Below are endorsements from the education community lauding Rep Honda's leadership as well as Rep Honda's delivery from the press call, foreword from the report, and background on Rep Honda's leadership in Congress.

[SELECT ENDORSEMENTS OF REP HONDA'S LEADERSHIP]

"Mike Honda's passion for improving American schools and for making sure every child has a chance to succeed is infectious, and inspired the work of the Commission. His focus on addressing the deep inequities that unjustly hold back millions of kids -- and which therefore hurt America both morally and economically -- is filling a vital void in the debate," said Matt Miller, a member of the Commission and a Washington Post columnist.

"On behalf of Congressman Honda's fellow educators in the American Federation of Teachers," said Randi Weingarten, president of the American Federation of Teachers and a member of the Commission. "I offer our thanks for the instrumental role he played in every stage of this commission—its founding, meetings and now this report, which rightly notes that we cannot achieve educational excellence for all our children without addressing the educational, physical and social and emotional needs of our most vulnerable children. America must do what we do in our best schools in all our schools, for all our students. This means excellent teaching—and much more. Every school should have adequate resources, sound policies that put teaching and learning, not testing, at the core of its work, and have supports to ensure that students are ready to learn. The report of the Excellence and Equity Commission makes all this clear. What is less clear is whether leaders will finally summon the will and the wherewithal to reject the entrenched discriminatory practices that have deprived generations of students of the excellent education they deserve. Parents and educators know that no focus or investment could be more worthwhile. Let this be the time that America finally summons the will to act."

"Congressman Honda's deep understanding of these issues as both an educator and policy maker led him to launch this group. We are all grateful for his vision and heart in this matter,"

said Linda Darling-Hammond is Charles E. Ducommun Professor of Education at Stanford University and a member of the Commission. "Through much debate and deliberation, this report presents a blueprint for how to guarantee that each child has a fair shot at the American Dream."

"I thank Congressman Mike Honda for calling us together to address this vital issue, and look forward to working with him to guarantee the bright future of all of America's children," said Ben Jealous, president of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored

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People and a member of the Commission. “

For too long has our country provided unequal education and opportunity for America's children. This report offers a cautionary note about the consequences of our anemic and regressive support for education. It also acts as a beacon that points the way forward, toward more equitable and profitable investments in learning for all students. It's time to act and guarantee a quality education for all our children.”

“NEA applauds Congressmen Mike Honda (D-CA) and Chaka Fattah (D-PA) who for years have called on policymakers to focus undivided attention on identifying solutions to eliminate the inequitable distribution of a variety of resources among our schools,”

said Dennis Van Roekel, President, National Education Association and a member of the Commission.

“I continue to sound the call for equity because we know that education creates opportunity and levels the playing field for kids who may not have access to all they deserve. The road to economic prosperity and helping those aspiring to join the middle class runs directly through our nation's public schools and we must all do more to ensure our public schools are the best they can be. I am honored to have been part of the Equity and Excellence Commission and look forward to all of us taking up the mantle of change called for in the Commission's report to fight for the building blocks that will ensure equity in the distribution of educational resources in order to increase student performance and close the gaps that persist.”

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[BACKGROUND]

Congressman Honda submitted the Citizens' Commission on Educational Equity Act of 2008 (HR 7203) in September 2008 to convene a commission to examine and propose solutions to the inequalities and present in the public education system. Subsequently, in December of 1009, he convened an advisory committee comprised of 20 of the nation's leading authorities on educational issues (some of whom went on to serve on the official commission) to discuss the formation, direction, and charge of the commission that was to be formed. Congressman Honda reintroduces the legislation in the 111th Congress as the Educational Opportunity and Equity Commission Act of 2009 (HR 1758).

The Equity and Excellence Commission was officially created through appropriations language submitted by Congressman Honda when he served on the Appropriations Committee in the 111th Congress. As a result of this appropriations request, the commission was established by the Secretary of Education and is governed by the provisions of the Federal Advisory Committee Act (FACA). The Office for Civil Rights (OCR) within the Department of Education provided the financial, administrative, and staff support necessary to operate the Commission. The OCR was allotted \$200,000 for FY 2011 and \$500,000 for FY 2012. The commission's charter was filed February 2, 2011.

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The commission held six town hall meetings across the nation to hear from students, parents, teachers, and local community members on their experience with the public education system.

Additionally, the entire commission convened six meetings to hear expert testimonies and engage in discussion and deliberation around the issues. During those two years, Congressman Honda attended the town hall meeting in his home district and actively participated in all of the commission meetings.

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[TRANSCRIPT OF REP HONDA'S COMMENTS ON PRESS CALL]

Thank Secretary Duncan, Co-Chairs Chris Edley and Tino Cuellar, and the commissioners for their work. Back in 2008 when I first legislated to create this commission, I did it so that not only some of our children could be successful, but that each and every child could have a chance to succeed. Then as an appropriator when I secured funding to form this historic commission, I was humbled and honored for the opportunity to work with the nation's foremost educational leaders and researchers. This group represented various philosophies, backgrounds, and perspectives, but a common passion and vision to guarantee an equitable education for every child. After 30 years as an educator and witnessing disparities in the system, I'm gratified to see this process of taking steps to address the needs of all of America's children is underway.

This group was charged to examine the educational inequalities present, and to recommend changes that would ensure each and every child has the opportunity to achieve. Having attended and participated at all the meetings and even holding a town hall in my district, I have seen members of this Commission, including myself, learn from one another. Out of these numerous voices we have a report that contains one singular, common vision to ensure each and every child has the opportunity to achieve.

To do this, the commission has recommended numerous items, but ones that I have been passionate for during my time in Congress have been: This is the first time that the federal government has called on providing access to high quality early childhood education for each and every child. We need to ensure that we get everyone to the same starting line and close gaps early before they get too big. We cannot afford to play catch up later. I applaud President Obama for calling for the same policy in his State of the Union. I look forward to working with the administration to actualize this. We need to overhaul how we finance schools; the federal government needs to incentivize states to acknowledge the needs of each and every child when deciding on how to fund their schools.

We need to ensure that our children have access high quality and effective teachers. We need to recruit, rigorously train, and retain the best and the brightest and make sure all our schools are staffed by these teachers. This report may seem like the culminating work of the Commission, but this is only the beginning. There is a lot of serious work that we need to do to

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address the inequities in opportunities for our students in public schools. There is still much to do to ensure each and every child has a fair shot at the American dream.

It is my hope that this common vision presented in the report will keep us focused on the needs of each and every child. I look forward to pushing forward the recommendations presented in this report through Congress working with my friend and colleague Congressman Fattah. I know we are both passionate and committed to providing a quality education for all children. To begin this next chapter of ensuring educational equity, I will be hosting a roll out event in my district in the coming month. We will bring out the commissioners to engage in a discussion of the recommendations with the schools and the community.

We will examine not only the disparities, but how schools are working to provide a high quality education that affords each child an opportunity to succeed. I look forward to continuing this dialogue in my district. It is only when our nation begins to address the needs of each and every child that we can ensure that America will continue to remain a global leader and innovator.

This is not a minority issue, this is not a poverty issues, this is an American issue. To ensure our future economic and social prosperity it is imperative we work together to address these issues. I look forward to continuing the work with these commissioners, this administration, Congressman Fattah and with the American people to ensure equity and excellence for each and every child in the American public school system and thereby guaranteeing America's prosperity.

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[FOREWORD]

Dear Reader:

The future of the American Dream depends on what we do at this decisive moment.

As an educator of more than 30 years, I know the dream is first ignited in the classroom. Education is the origin of opportunity in our cities and towns, and it is the engine of exceptionalism on the world stage. Now, more than ever before, the attainability of the American dream is imperiled by an opportunity gap in public education—a gap exacerbated by wealth disparities at the local level. Our nation's global leadership is also threatened by widening disparities between American children and students from other developed nations, as our children and families fall further below the poverty line.

At this decisive moment, the Commission on Equity and Excellence in Education issues this seminal report. It is not a restatement of public education's struggles, nor is it a mere list of recommendations. Rather, this is a declaration of an urgent national mission: to provide equity and excellence in education in American public schools once and for all. This collective wisdom is a historic blueprint for making the dream of equity, and a worldclass education, for each and

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every American child a reality.

After a year and a half of ground-breaking public dialogue and debate, of study and scrutiny, this report reflects the thinking of the nation's foremost educational experts, who worked arduously and collaboratively, despite our sometime-disparate ideas about educational reform. It is also inclusive of the input, experiences and ideas of teachers, parents, students, school board members, counselors and principals from across the nation. We present a big and bold new vision on the federal role in education by recommending transformations in school funding structures, implementation of vibrant early education programs, and a commitment to a stronger investment for teacher preparation and retention in the field. This will affect how we assess and address the educational needs of each and every child in America, thereby forging equity for all.

This game-changing report embraces the urgent truth in education reform: that parity is not equity. The report commits to a transformative vision on how local, state and federal governments can, and should, wield power to ensure excellence in education for all of America's children.

We are at a formative moment in American education, and this report reflects the gravity of the moment. We must all work together tirelessly to make public education thrive in every community in this great nation. By rising to meet this moment, and by guaranteeing that each child is inspired and equipped to succeed, we safeguard America's founding values and advance our competitiveness, our prosperity and our security. When public education is equitable, the dream of America endures.

Very truly yours,

Mike Honda
Member of Congress

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[MORE QUOTES]

"Our education system needs serious reform to serve a twenty-first century America. In this new era, we can no longer afford to ignore issues of unequal educational opportunity that affect the very groups that comprise the core of our future workforce. This critical commission report can catalyze the changes necessary to craft education systems that will secure the equity of opportunity that will in turn yield continued and increased educational excellence," **said Thomas A. Saenz, President and General Counsel, MALDEF, and a member of the Commission.**

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"I am heartened by the consensus on the commission that our school finance systems should be more equitable, and I am delighted by the support for increasing access to high quality preschool," **said Jim Ryan, University of Virginia School of Law and a member of the Commission.**

The evidence is overwhelming regarding the benefits of preschool. It's simply a very, very smart investment, as President Obama recently explained when announcing his support for universal preschool. I also think it was very important for the commission to recognize that concentrated poverty and racial separation remain critical barriers to equal educational opportunity and called on the federal and state governments to address the intolerably high levels of socioeconomic and racial isolation that remain in our school systems.

I commend Congressman Honda for drawing attention to these important issues, for inspiring the Commission, and for his excellent assistance with and attention to the Commission's work. □ We could not have done this without him ."

"In these days of divisive politics, it was very important for **Congressman Honda to provide strong leadership**

by initiating a bipartisan commission to deal with the terribly important challenges that face us in education.

□ **Congressman Honda was one of the first to see**

that our twin deficits -- achievement that falls behind other nations and nagging gaps by race and income -- are inextricably linked,"

said Eric Hanushek, senior fellow at the Hoover Institution of Stanford University and a member of the Commission.

"The pursuit of significant education reform is imperative when considering that we are in an era of significant demographic change. Not responding to the changing face of America has a number of negative consequences, which this report aims to address. **I appreciate Congressman Honda's leadership in education and the perspective he added to the work of the commission,**

" **said Robert Teranishi, an Associate Professor of Higher Education at New York University and Co-Director for the Institute for Globalization and Education and member of the Commission.**□

"I am very grateful for Congressman Mike Honda's leadership in making The Equity and Excellence Commission a reality, and calling attention to the urgency of one of our nation's most important missions—ensuring each and every child has access to a high quality public education. Congressman Honda's thought leadership, and hard work at every Commission meeting, helped drive the work of the Commission and its culminating report. I truly hope that "For Each and Every Child" generates serious discussion, and much needed fiscal and policy

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reforms, in Congress, and in state capitals and school districts across America. The continued prosperity and strength of our nation depends on every child in America having access to a high quality public education, regardless of their family circumstances or where they live. America has some of the best schools in the world, and if we work together, students in every neighborhood in America can have access to a world-class education,"

said Jesse Ruiz, Vice President, Chicago Board of Education and a member of the Commission.

"The leadership provided by Congressman Honda was pivotal in creating this important commission on educational equity and excellence, and ensuring that its work remained focused on the most critical issues facing the country. His commitment to these issues and how they affect our nation's future was the beacon that all commissioners followed. We are profoundly grateful for his leadership,"

said Mike Casserly, Executive Committee, Council of the Great City Schools, and a member of the Commission.

"It was truly an honor to serve on a Commission with so many thoughtful and passionate individuals. Although we rarely saw eye-to-eye on every issue, there was one guiding principal that allowed us to reach some of the most difficult and contentious issues on education today and that principal was simply that every American child irrespective of income, race, ethnicity or other innate characteristic has the right to receive the type of meaningful educational opportunity needed to become a productive member of society and a contributing member of our democracy. **We have one person to thank for keeping that guiding principal foremost in our deliberation: Congressman Michael Honda.** Rarely is an elected official willing to put the interest of poor, minority and other at-risk children ahead of his or her own political ambitions. Congressman Honda is just such an individual. He consistently pushed all of us to work towards creating an American educational system that is truly equitable and excellent and to overcome our personal and ideological differences by focusing on that broad vision. While the work embodied in this report is a product of hard work done by my fellow Commissioners, none of it would have been possible without the inspiration and leadership provided by Congressman Honda,"

said Ralph Martire, executive director of the Center for Tax and Budget Accountability and a member of the Commission.

"We simply can't deliver high quality public education to all children without adequate and equitable school funding. For too long, students, families and communities have been burdened by broken systems of education funding within their individual states. Additionally, we know ensuring access to well-planned, high quality preschool is an essential precondition to accelerating the educational attainment of our nation's at-risk children and children in impoverished neighborhoods. The Commission sets out a bold and groundbreaking blueprint for us to reach that goal over the next 10 years. There has to be some level of coordination for child care, Head start and public school early education programs at the federal level in order to guarantee equity and excellence. **I am grateful for the Congressman's leadership to drive this important conversation that impacts children and families,**

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said David Sciarra, Executive Director, Education Law Center.

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“The Equity and Excellence Commission report underscores the importance of implementing a comprehensive reform strategy that focuses on adequate and equitable investments in education; and supports early childhood education and out-of-school time learning—recommendations the National Urban League has long championed,” **said National Urban League President and CEO Marc H. Morial.**

“I am proud to have participated on the Commission and applaud Reps. Fattah and Honda for their leadership in spearheading this important initiative.”

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