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September 7, 2011

RE: Oppose Amendment # 9 to H.R. 2218: Empowering Parents through Quality Charter Schools Act

Dear Member of Congress:

On behalf of the Council for Exceptional Children (CEC), whose members serve over 10 million children and youth with disabilities and/or gifts and talents as teachers, administrators, parents, and researchers, I urge you to **vote against amendment #9 to H.R. 2218**, the *Empowering Parents through Quality Charter Schools Act* offered by Congressman King (IA). This misguided amendment would weaken protections for students with disabilities in charter schools, and severely undermine the bill, which CEC supported and which passed out of the Education and the Workforce Committee on a bi-partisan vote.

CEC and its members have long been concerned by reports that demonstrate both a lack of access for students with disabilities to charter schools and a lack of oversight to ensure that students with disabilities in charter schools are appropriately served and receive all of their rights under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). Several provisions within H.R. 2218 support increased access, service and accountability, thereby addressing many of the existing issues for students with disabilities in charter schools. Key to addressing these issues, however, is a provision within H.R. 2218 which defines a *High Quality Charter School* as one that has demonstrated success in increasing academic achievement for all students, and specifically students with disabilities. Congressman King's amendment would remove this important requirement and lower the standard. Specifically, it would strike language that requires charter schools to have a record of success in working with student subgroups (i.e. students with disabilities, students from low-income backgrounds, English language learners) to receive federal dollars. Striking this important language would weaken protections added in direct response to reports of inequities in charter schools. If included, CEC would no longer support this legislation.

Provisions for students with disabilities in H.R. 2218 have bi-partisan support and represent a step forward for education policy in our nation by acknowledging that charter schools must include and appropriately serve students with disabilities. CEC supports the passage of H.R. 2218, as it passed out of the Education and the Workforce Committee, and, therefore, urges you to **vote against Amendment #9 by Congressman King (IA)**. This misguided amendment will only weaken this bill and allow inequities for students with disabilities to continue.

Please do not hesitate to contact me with any questions.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Deborah A. Ziegler".

Deborah A. Ziegler
Associate Executive Director
Policy and Advocacy Services
Council for Exceptional Children