



**COUNCIL OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA**  
THE JOHN A. WILSON BUILDING  
1350 PENNSYLVANIA AVENUE, N.W.  
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20004

April 4, 2010

Senator Harry Reid, Majority Leader  
United States Senate  
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Senator Reid,

I am writing to you today regarding H.R. 471: Scholarships for Opportunity and Results Act. Recently, the House voted favorably on this legislation and the matter is now before the Senate for consideration. It is my understanding that the Senate may also debate a companion bill. While I support funding the Opportunity Scholarship Program (OSP), I would like to share some serious concerns about H.R. 471, which I believe compromise educational benefits of the program.

This legislation represents the nexus of distinct sets of human rights and civil rights issues, all of which have implications of significance here in the District of Columbia and for the rest of the nation. In regard to human rights, the bill touches on two issues: 1) The right to a quality public education; and, 2) the right to protections afforded under the District's Human Rights Act. The bill also raises two critical civil rights issues: 1) the right of self-determination for the District of Columbia; and, 2) the separation of church and state.

I do support the \$60 million in additional Federal funds to sustain education reform initiatives of DCPS, DCPCS and OSP. **Despite my support for additional Federal funds included in this legislation, I believe that the OSP should not fund any organizations that fail to adhere to the same accountability standards as public and public charter schools.** For example, some private schools operate outside the anti-discrimination provisions of the District's Human Rights Act.

To protect against discrimination, I will introduce legislation that prevents the use of local District funds in the administration of scholarships to organizations that do not fully comply with the District's Human Rights Act. I strongly urge the Senate to require all organizations, including those that are exempt, to adhere to the District's Human Rights Act.



In closing, I support the OSP but will take local legislative action to protect human rights. When fairly administered, OSP will sustain educational reforms in the District and accelerate reform initiatives that have demonstrated significant contributions to student achievement.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Sekou J. Biddle', written in a cursive style.

Sekou J. Biddle  
Councilmember, At-Large

Cc:

Honorable Joseph I. Lieberman  
Honorable Susan M. Collins