



The Joseph P. Kennedy, Jr. Foundation

April 20, 2006

Dear Colleague:

The President has signed new legislation that will make a big difference in addressing our nation's critical shortage of qualified special education teachers. On February 8, 2006 a new provision was enacted ensuring the availability of loan forgiveness of up to \$17,500 for individuals who are now or who are seeking to become highly qualified special education teachers. I am writing to ask you to help me spread the word about this important new loan-forgiveness provision.

While our nation can be proud of its many accomplishments on behalf of students with special educational needs, we have not met our obligation to ensure that each special needs student is taught by a teacher who is fully qualified. The shortage of special education teachers has surpassed the shortage of math and science teachers. Principals and school administrators struggle every year to fill classrooms with qualified special education teachers. Students and families routinely experience the impact of an unqualified teacher in terms of undeveloped skills and lost opportunities.

Only if prospective special education teachers know about this loan forgiveness incentive, will it have the desired effect of attracting college students to major in special education and attracting new special education teachers to work in the schools with children who have the greatest needs.

I have attached a fact sheet about this provision for your review. I urge you to post this on your website, and to urge your members and affiliated organizations to post it on their websites.

This is a significant opportunity to help students who count on us the most. Thank you in advance for your partnership in helping to spread the word.

Sincerely,

Eunice Kennedy Shriver

LOAN FORGIVENESS OF \$17,500 AVAILABLE FOR SPECIAL EDUCATION TEACHERS

- **On February 8, 2006 a new law made permanent loan forgiveness of up to \$17,500 for new special education teachers**
- **If you are interested in becoming a special education teacher, this loan forgiveness could be available to you**
- **There is a vast shortage of special education teachers in schools throughout the nation**
- **Job opportunities for special education teachers are plentiful in virtually every state, and in elementary, middle and high schools**
- **Special educators work with students who experience a range of learning challenges, including intellectual disabilities, learning disabilities, sensory disabilities and emotional disabilities**
- **Special education is a profession where you can truly make a difference in peoples' lives**
- **For more information, see the letter from Secretary of Education, Margaret Spellings at www.ed.gov/policy/highered/guid/secletter/060301a.html**