



June 27, 2005

The Honorable Patrick J. Tiberi
Chairman, Subcommittee on Select Education
House Committee on Education & the Workforce
230 Ford House Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Rubén E. Hinojosa
Ranking Member, Subcommittee on Select Education
House Committee on Education & the Workforce
230 Ford House Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Tiberi and Ranking Member Hinojosa,

On behalf of the nearly 1,300 members of the Electronic Industries Alliance (EIA) and the members of the National Science & Technology Education Partnership (NSTEP), EIA's philanthropic partner, we thank you for the Select Education Subcommittee's recent vote to reauthorize Title VII of the Higher Education Act, which funds essential federal graduate programs. H.R. 510's emphasis on training math and science teachers, in particular, is one that EIA, NSTEP and our corporate members strongly support. As we noted in our policy playbook on innovation released last spring (and available online at www.eia.org/innovation_playbook.pdf), it is crucial that we find ways to encourage new K-12 math and science teachers and ensure that experienced teachers' skills in these areas are continually strengthened and updated.

Few industries are as acutely aware of the need for science, technology, engineering and math (STEM) proficiency in our nation's workforce as the electronics industry. One of the fundamental concerns among U.S. high-tech business leaders and owners today is that fewer students are entering the workforce with the skill sets necessary to continue the nation's strong tradition of innovation and technological advancement. This includes not only basic STEM proficiency but also the ability to build upon that proficiency to meet the evolving demands of the market.

It is imperative that American STEM education become aligned with the practical needs of American high-tech businesses. For far too long, the vital connection between classroom knowledge and real-world relevance has been neglected. Students – and, equally important, teachers – must have the opportunity to understand how math and science skills translate from the blackboard to the circuit board. The nation needs a business community tied to the K-12 education system, and a K-12 education system whose curriculum will help create workers who thrive in the 21st-century business world. EIA and NSTEP already support these efforts through programs such as TechXplore®, an innovative mentoring program that links industry directly with the K-12 community.

Those who benefit from the graduate programs funded by H.R. 510 will help strengthen the pipeline of qualified math and science teachers in the K-12 system. And we hope these K-12 teachers, in turn, will work to get their students genuinely excited about the role of science and technology in their world. We appreciate your focus on this critical area of education and strongly support the passage of the Graduate Opportunities in Higher Education Act this year. If EIA or NSTEP can be of any help to you in this pursuit, please don't hesitate to call either of us directly.

Sincerely,

Dave McCurdy
President & CEO
Electronic Industries Alliance

Barbara Wortmann
President
National Science & Technology Education Partnership

cc: Chairman John A. Boehner
Ranking Member George Miller
Members of the House Committee on Education & the Workforce