

November 19, 2009 **Mr. SCOTT of Virginia:** Madam Speaker, I rise today in support of H.R. 4122, the Graduation for All Act of 2009 (GFA). I would like to thank Chairman *George Miller*

for introducing this comprehensive bill that creates a three-year grant to help turn around our nation's lowest performing schools. This bill will help address some of the problems facing our schools and ensure that they are moving toward a goal of graduating all of our children.

For far too long, schools have not been held accountable for ensuring that students graduate on time with a high school diploma. As a result, some students leave high school without a meaningful education that provides quality academic experiences sufficient for success in college or the workplace. Additionally, high school students are dropping out at an alarming rate. A recent study found that only 53 percent of all young people in the nation's 50 largest cities are graduating from high school on time. Regrettably, roughly 12 percent of all secondary schools in the United States produce approximately half of the nation's secondary school dropouts. In these secondary schools, known as "dropout factories," African American, Native American and Hispanic students have graduation rates that are 50 percent or below.

Recently, strong reform efforts have targeted dropout factories and other low performing high schools, but it is obvious we have to do more and start our efforts earlier. More of an emphasis must be placed on the lowest performing middle schools. Too many students leave middle school with significant deficiencies such as being behind on English and Math proficiency; this leaves them ill prepared for the rigors of high school.

Increasing graduation rates and improving academic achievement will enrich the lives of our children as well as strengthen our workforce and nation as a whole. A nation enjoys a competitive advantage in the global marketplace when it has a well educated and well trained workforce. If we expect to compete, we must ensure that all of our children receive a quality education.

The Graduation for All Act will make education a priority and invests significant funding to accomplish several goals. First, it provides funding for schools to increase teacher and leadership effectiveness, hire highly qualified teachers, restructure schools, and transition students out of low performing schools into higher achieving schools. Second, the bill will fund initiatives that increase college access and completion such as dual enrollment and early college programs. Finally, the legislation includes provisions from the Every Student Counts Act (ESCA, H.R. 1569), which I introduced on March 17, 2009, that will require consistent and accurate counting of high school dropouts, require the establishment of aggressive and attainable graduation rate goals, and provide incentives to meet these goals.

This bill will make significant strides toward improving student achievement, postsecondary readiness and graduation rates. It is my hope that Congress will move this legislation quickly and it will be signed into law. This will ensure that all of our nation's students will receive the kind of help and support required for them to obtain a quality education. Thank you.

