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January 7, 2010

Commissioner Eric J. Smith
Florida Department of Education
Turlington Building, Suite 1514
325 West Gaines Street
Tallahassee, Florida 32399

Re: Florida Chamber of Commerce Supports Florida's Race to the Top Application

Dear Commissioner Smith:

Florida is poised to be a part of a unique educational opportunity through the federal Race to the Top initiative and the Florida Chamber of Commerce wholeheartedly supports the state's efforts to compete for and win this national competition. As we build on more than a decade of education reforms that continue to garner unprecedented student achievement, I am confident that our efforts will deliver a learning environment that prepares our students for a vast and competitive global economy.

Our state's economic and financial future depends on a skilled and highly-trained workforce. The students of today represent the community leaders, business owners and entrepreneurs of tomorrow. They must be given the foundation necessary to prepare for their future and funding from Race to the Top will provide the resources necessary to equip our teachers to do just that. Through the professional development opportunities illustrated in your plan, educators will be given the time and resources to perfect their craft resulting in more successful learning experiences for our students. As a leader/member of my community, I have a vested stake in the education of the next generation of Floridians and Race to the Top has the power to dramatically elevate the quality of education those students receive.

I am hopeful that Florida will be successful in obtaining this federal funding in order to transform our education system into one that is unmatched anywhere in the nation. A challenge of this magnitude requires every segment of our society to come together and carry out this bold vision to redefine the culture in our schools. The Florida Chamber of Commerce is encouraged by Florida's Race to the Top application, and the possibilities it may bring for our schools. Please accept our support for your efforts as you work to ensure our economic prosperity for years to come.

My best,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Mark Wilson". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Mark A. Wilson
President and CEO
Florida Chamber of Commerce