



December 17, 2002

The Honorable Chaka Fattah
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Congressman Fattah:

On behalf of the American Counseling Association, the nation's largest non-profit membership organization representing the counseling profession, I am writing to express our support for and strong interest in your "Student Bill of Rights Act" legislation.

We applaud your leadership in seeking to provide federal incentives to address our nation's widely varying levels of support for public education. If access to high-quality education is to ensure equal opportunity to all Americans, then the current differences between the quality and condition of schools in poor and affluent areas must be addressed.

We are especially pleased that your legislation recognizes the importance of ensuring that students have adequate access to the services of qualified professional school counselors. School counselors are licensed or certified by departments of education in all 50 states, and are required to have completed graduate coursework or have obtained a master's degree in counseling. Sadly, the current national average student-to-counselor ratio in elementary and secondary schools is nearly 500 to 1, far above the recommended 250 to 1 ratio. Numerous studies and anecdotal evidence have shown the benefits of specific counseling services and programs, and improving access to such services must be a part of any effort to improve the educational achievement of children and youth.

We look forward to working with your office in support of the Student Bill of Rights Act, and urge your staff to contact Scott Barstow, ACA Director of Public Policy and Legislation (703-823-9800 x234, sbarstow@counseling.org) if we can be of any assistance in your efforts.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "David M. Kaplan". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first letters of each name being capitalized and prominent.

David M. Kaplan, Ph.D., NCC
President
American Counseling Association