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FAX ALERT

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President Proposes Same Education Proposal from 1986

Statement by Jeanne Allen
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The President's latest educational proposal (as described in the May 19th edition of *The New York Times*) to allow low-income children to go to any public school in their district is about 15 years behind the times. Governor Clinton of Arkansas and the rest of the nation's governors endorsed a similar program in 1986 when they released *A Time for Results* a report that was then considered groundbreaking.

In the five years that followed, more than 10 states passed comprehensive public school choice plans. Since then 20 states have passed public school choice programs that allow children to attend the public school of their choice in their state.

Despite such efforts and the efforts of districts in other states, the Center for Education Reform found, in a national survey conducted in 1997, that fewer than 100,000 children were choosing to go to schools other than ones assigned to them.

The reason for the small number of families participating in public school choice is not due to a lack of desire for choice in education. Poll after poll demonstrates that parents want more than the option to choose; they want good choices. Most public school choice plans merely offer more of the same, rather than an array of unique, high-quality schools.

Having to choose from schools that are required to operate the same way and deliver the same programs that are under the thumb of the same rules and contracts that currently bind them is no choice at all.

Go back to the drawing board, Mr. President. The data shows that more of our children are falling through the cracks than ever before and you're suggesting that instead of repaving the sidewalk that we simply paper them over. It's a sad day for kids when the President can't find anything better than a dusty and not very effective proposal to allow children to pick and choose schools that are no better or worse than those in which they are currently enrolled. Where's the choice?

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