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**Testimony Presented to
The House Subcommittee on Elementary,
Secondary and Vocational Education**

**Remarks by
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Mr. Chairman, my name is William Woodside and I am Chairman of Sky Chefs, Inc. I also serve on the Board of Trustees of the Committee for Economic Development (CED) and I am Chairman of the Board of the Institute for Educational Leadership.

I am very pleased to have the opportunity to address this committee on the subject of education reform and the Federal role. It was just under six years ago that I sat here with four of my fellow colleagues from business to support the extension and expansion of Chapter I, in the belief that we were not doing enough to address the needs of educationally disadvantaged children in this country. At the time, it was considered unusual for a group of senior executives from Fortune 500 corporations to testify on behalf of an education program. Now, of course, business leaders are involved in education reform around the country.

You have asked me to address three questions: what is happening is school reform; what is the role of the Federal government in school reform; and how should existing programs be modified in the interest of school reform.

Let me answer them in sequence. Today we seem to be in the midst of the second wave of reform since the issuance of *A Nation at Risk* in 1983. The first wave, particularly with respect to K-12, concentrated on doing more of the same — i.e., we told Johnny to take three years of Math instead of two, or we had Susie stay in school a while longer, and then we judged how well we were doing by instituting statewide minimum competency tests. We also concentrated on trying to increase teacher performance by raising teaching standards. Indeed, by 1988 almost every state in the union has increased standards for both students and teachers alike.

But we didn't seem to get much in the way of results. SAT test scores did not improve, drop-out rates were reduced slightly, a few more students were

taking Advanced Placement (AP) exams, and we seemed to be doing a little bit better on international comparisons, but not much. And the National Association for Educational Progress (NAEP) results kept telling us not only that we were more stupid than ever, but that we were more stupid than everyone else around the world.

In 1988 or thereabouts, we decided that all these efforts were not enough, and that what was needed was a restructuring of the schools of the way educational services were being delivered. We determined that a major problem in the schools was a process one; that the heavy top-down bureaucratic nature of our public schools stifled creativity, and condemned students to outdated and irrelevant curricula; that teachers didn't have enough voice in determining what to teach or how to teach it; that they spent too little time teaching and too much time administrating; and that the system was clogged with excessive administration and mandates. So in the last few years we have seen efforts to restructure the relationships between the central office and individual schools; between teachers in the classroom and their principals; and between parents and the school. We have also made efforts to integrate services, including health and nutrition, at the school site. The Bush Administration took the restructuring notion one step further, through the development of "break the mold" schools and the push for more market competition through private school choice.

Today we appear to have three distinct types of initiatives, which include aspects of these two reform "waves." They are: improving educational quality by raising standards for students, teachers, and schools and focusing on accountability (an effort in many instances spearheaded or at least strongly supported by the business community); restructuring schools as places of work and teaching as a profession; and focusing on the educational needs of at-risk

children through the provision of early childhood programs and greater coordination between educational and social service.

There are numerous reform efforts underway. The states of Oregon, Washington, Massachusetts, Oklahoma, Kentucky, Arizona, and South Carolina have completed or are in the process of enacting major reform legislation. In a number of instances business leaders, including those from the CED and the Business Roundtable, have played a significant role.

We have seen some successes. Many of them have come at the school building or district level. In some cases we have even seen the entire state improve. In South Carolina, where system reform has been underway for quite some time under the leadership of Governor Riley, students improved their performance on the SAT by an average of forty points between 1983 and 1989; college attendance increased by 7%, and between 1984 and 1991 the number of students who passed doubled.

There is one area of reform where I believe we are making some considerable strides and that is in preparing young children for school. It was not until Brad Butler and my CED colleagues emphasized the importance of early investment in children that this issue took hold and that programs like Head Start, early childhood immunizations, and WIC came to the fore. I give considerable credit to Brad, who as you may know is the former Chairman of Procter & Gamble, for pointing out to many of us in the business community, who spend a good deal of time at the elementary and secondary level, that no matter how much we improve K-12 education, children will not benefit from school if they are not prepared to be there.

Generally, however, there is not much to crow about. While most agree that systemic reform is required to produce outcomes like those in South Carolina, it appears that political leaders at the state and local level have been unwilling to

get ahead of their voters. State leaders, and more often state legislatures, have with some notable exceptions avoided establishing statewide standards that are too high, fearing that high failure rates might cost them their jobs. State policymakers also do not relish shaking up the institutional structures in the face of politically influential and vested interests at the state and local levels. And local superintendents, who serve at the will of popularly elected school boards, are also often reluctant to make significantly tougher curriculum standards for fear of parent or other constituent resistance.

What this all signifies is that, unhappily, the American voter does not seem to care enough — or perhaps I should say, *know* enough — to pressure for change. This unhappy fact was roundly confirmed by a Harris poll commissioned in 1991 by the Committee for Economic Development and the Pew Foundation (in cooperation with the Business Roundtable, the National Goals Panel and the National Council of Education Standards). This extensive poll indicated that while most employers lamented the quality of the product coming out of the schools, parents felt just the opposite — that the schools were doing a pretty good, and sometimes an excellent job, in preparing their kids for work, higher education or life.

This is not to say that parents do not want to improve their schools. It does say they don't have enough information to judge how well their children are doing. Indeed, the same Harris poll shows that 88 percent believe we need high education standards to compete, and an overwhelming number, 82 percent, believe we need common national standards that allow them to compare their children's performance to world class standards. Yet the poll also reveals that parents do not believe that current high school standards *are* clear, and simply find that they do not know how to judge whether what their child is learning is set to world class standards or not. I will be fascinated to see how parents have

reacted in Kentucky, where statewide tests based on world-class standards were passed on average by only 9 percent of the students.

Where does that leave us? Everywhere and nowhere, I suspect. We have instances of real change and real gains in student performance in the midst of a lot of smoke and little overall improvement.

This brings me to your next two questions: what should the Federal role be in assisting in education reform; and what specific changes should we make in current programs? Again, these are very large questions.

I believe there are a few principles which Federal education should follow. These are principles, I believe, that many of my colleagues in the business community would share.

First, the Federal government must be a leader without strangling states and localities with too many categorical and too much regulation. In short, this means the Federal government needs to help the American people understand better what we as a nation expect of children and how our children are measuring up in a global economy. This means involving the Federal government in the development of agreed-upon national standards and assessments. It means the Federal government helping the states to set standards, to develop curricula and school delivery standards, and to assist in professional development. And this means the President *effectively* using the bully-pulpit as well as key department heads.

Second, with limited resources to use as a safety net, education funds should be targeted to those schools and students most in need, and quality should rule over quantity and flexibility over categorization. This means reducing the number of categorical programs so that children are no longer segregated in "pull out" programs and so that teachers can establish child-specific programs that address the child as a whole, not a component part. On

the issue of equalization, I would *not* support the notion that Federal funds be denied to states that have not fully equalized because, in my view, this only penalizes children.

Third, only the Federal government is in a position to carry out the research, development and dissemination functions. Only the federal government is in a position to learn what works in one part of the country and get this information to other parts of the country, and only the Federal government can provide research and experimentation in the area of education on a scale that gives us useful information. This means that OERI needs to emphasize its educational role as much as its research role; to tie these activities to systemic change; to provide technical assistance to localities who are attempting systemic change; and to consider the role of R&D while debating the reauthorization of basic programs.

Fourth, all federal programs need to be viewed in the way they address all the developmental needs of children, from conception to graduation. We must stop passing laws under different statutes, delivered by different agencies and departments, which deal only with one part of the child at a time. Whether it has an educational deficiency, income deficiency, health deficiency, or nutritional deficiency, or even parental deficiency, a child cannot learn effectively. This means that we have got to stop the idiocy of having multiple programs that affect children's *abilities* to learn separate from those that they are designed to *teach* them to learn.

The President has chosen impressive key cabinet secretaries who could help him provide this collaborative leadership. As governor of South Carolina, Secretary Riley demonstrated his clear understanding of the relationships between education and other services in building strong communities — and the relationship between strong communities and a strong economy. Donna Shalala,

the new Secretary of the Department of Health and Human Services, is also a national leader in education as well as children's issues. Hopefully they will be able to develop greater interagency linkages and collaboration.

Revamping programs so that they make more sense will require tough choices and rigorous analysis. It means revisiting and perhaps radically revising funding streams and eligibility requirements. And it means including new players in the decision-making process. For example, the Department of Education should be a partner as other departments move ahead on policies that affect students. Upcoming legislative windows of opportunity for collaboration include Congressional review of key laws that expire in 1994 or 1995, including Head Start, Food Stamps, WIC and several major block grant programs.

The most obvious legislative vehicle for educational action to encourage collaboration in states and communities is the upcoming Congressional reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA), which includes the \$6.7 billion Chapter I program for disadvantaged children. We are not suggesting setting up more bureaucratic structures or creating a separate categorical program called "collaboration," but rather weaving incentives for state and local approaches throughout the law. For example, schools that effectively link education and other services for low-income children could be tangibly rewarded with more money, more flexibility, or waivers from troublesome regulations.

Other departments could and should join with the Department of Education in reshaping parts of ESEA, with an eye towards reducing conflicting definitions, standards and procedures among programs — all of which, after all, serve largely the same children and families. For example: should all children in Chapter I schools be automatically eligible for Medicaid? And how can reporting

and accountability mechanisms be made more consistent and less cumbersome, with more focus on outcomes and less on process?

Many of the same comments could be made about the WIC program. Participation in WIC improves the health of low-income mothers and young children and saves money. In 1991, I and four other corporate leaders testified before the House Budget Committee to urge Congress to provide full funding of WIC by 1996. Our recommendation was based on findings of numerous studies and our concern about the future of the American workforce. We believe fully funded WIC will help ensure that the nation meets the education goal of having all children who enter school in 2000 ready to learn. Since the hearing, additional studies have been completed which further substantiate the cost savings provided by the WIC program, and, I believe, the need to fully fund WIC.

I urge you to continue your support of the WIC program and to argue vigorously for its expansion. To ensure that quality education prepares our children to become contributing members of society, we must guarantee that children enter school ready to learn. Fully funding WIC is a good way to meet this guarantee.

In closing, Mr. Chairman, you appear to be facing a rather large education agenda in this Congress. The Elementary Secondary Education Act, OERI, NSF, Head Start, and the National Service Act, I am told, are all on the agenda. And there is likely to be a school-to-work transition bill involving some form of apprenticeship.

It would seem to me that the business as usual mode of looking at all these programs separately under different jurisdictions would not suffice. We should not only be looking at how to change existing programs, we should be looking at how these programs fit together to affect the overall development of a child, from conception to graduation. If this means completely changing our current

structures, so be it, but if we are to have true change in the schools I believe this needs to be done.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment today.