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August 27, 2009

The Honorable Arne Duncan

Secretary

U.S. Department of Education

400 Maryland Avenue, SW

Washington, D.C. 20202

**Attention:** Race to the Top Comments from Massachusetts Parent Teacher Association (PTA)

Dear Secretary Duncan,

Thank you for the opportunity to submit comments regarding the Race to the Top Fund's proposed priorities, requirements, definitions, and selection criteria.

Families play a critical role in children's school readiness as well as of students' decision to pursue higher education. Their role is a shared responsibility through collaboration with schools, educators, and community organizations to achieve more effective educational opportunities.

Effective family engagement is essential to close proficiency gaps, contributing to increased academic achievement, regardless of parents' education level, ethnicity, or socioeconomic background. We write to strongly urge the Department to continue to deepen its work on family engagement in education; developing effective family engagement to strengthen the impact of the Race to the Top Fund on student achievement is vital in assisting the Department in achieving positive outcomes in its four core assurance areas.

By making family, school, and community engagement a critical component of the Race to the Top Fund's proposed requirements, priorities, and selection criteria, States will be able to leverage systemic family engagement efforts to improve educational outcomes for all students.

Respectfully submitted,

Executive Committee,

Massachusetts Parent Teacher Association