

May 29, 1958

Honorable William A. Proxmire
Senate Office Building
Washington 25, D. C.

Dear Senator Proxmire:

Many of my colleagues and I have been delighted to note and second your determined and active interest in encouraging our national leadership in education and scientific research.

There are two pending bills which I would recommend to your sympathetic attention. One is the Health Research Facilities Act which I understand is in committee now. To complement the splendid research and training programs of the NIH which have done so much to advance medical research during the past decade we urgently need a steady expansion of the facilities to house the research activities of our eager young scientists. There is hardly a university or research institute in the country that could not make a splendid return on the investment of construction funds.

The second is the national scholarship program as envisaged in the pending bills, S. 3163 and S. 3187. Both bills have many splendid features marred by what I hope are only transitory defects, such as the vague statutory prescriptions for science and languages. These are so indefinite it would be better to delete them. I am also dubious about the effectiveness of the secondary programs which require matching funds and complicated administrative machinery to allocate them directly to private and public colleges in the several states. For this session, I would hope therefore that maximum emphasis be placed on the scholarship programs while we take time to work out the best formulas for supporting the institutions themselves.

I do have my own suggestions for such a formula which, I believe, can sidestep many of the purported hazards of federal aid to education. This proposal would utilize the scholarship system to furnish automatic machinery for institutional support. My major premise is that financially healthy and independent universities are the best source of initiative in meeting the nation's challenges in higher education. I am enclosing a memorandum outlining this "Bill of Rights for Gifted Students" which I suggest is the safest and most constructive way to encourage both these students and the institutions which must serve them.

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More immediately, I would also criticize the criterion of need as an important factor in a scholarship program for gifted students. My arguments are summarized in appendix (2).

With all best regards,

Yours sincerely,

Joshua Lederberg
Chairman, Department of Medical Genetics

JL/ew

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