COALITION FOR TEACHING QUALITY

STATEMENT ON ONE YEAR EXTENSION OF “HIGHLY QUALIFIED” PROVISION INFY 13 CONTINUING RESOLUTION

*September 20, 2012-* The Coalition for Teaching Quality is pleased that Congress has finally heard the voice of 90 civil rights, education, disability, parent, student and community organizations and enacted a provision that will require national, state and district level data about the distribution of teachers in training who are described as “highly qualified.”Nearly two years after a federal provision made it acceptable for teachers in training to be labeled as “highly qualified” under No Child Left Behind (NCLB), the Congress has taken the first step toward truly understanding the disproportionate impact of this provision on our nation’s neediest students. The Coalition remains deeply concerned that Congress has yet to eliminate this legal loophole that prevents all students from having equal access to a fully-prepared and effective teacher in every classroom. While the Congress did once again extend this misguided provision in the appropriations process through the FY 13 continuing resolution, the extension was only for one year, not the two years that the Administration had requested.

The specific requirements of the data collection provision include the following:

* The Secretary of Education must submit a report to Congress by December 31, 2013 that provides a comprehensive picture, with state-level and Local Education Agencies (LEA) data, on the extent to which the following categories of students are taught by alternative route teachers-in-training who are deemed “highly qualified” pursuant to federal regulations: students with disabilities, English learners, students in rural areas, and students from low-income families.
* To produce the report required by this amendment, states and LEAs will be required to compile the data that districts are already required to have under the Parents’ Right to Know Section of NCLB regarding the professional qualifications of all their teachers.

Rep. Judy Chu (D-CA) noted that “This data will provide essential information to parents, to educators and to policy makers so that informed decisions can be made so that we can strengthen one of our nation’s most valuable assets, our public schools.”

The Coalition will continue to seek opportunities to eliminate the provision in federal law, but in the meantime the addition of badly needed data about its impact will prove invaluable to educating the public and other stakeholders. Eric Gonzalez, of the NAACP Legal Defense Fund, a member of the coalition, noted that “while we remain committed to ending the unconscionable practice of allowing teachers who are unprepared to be called “highly qualified, ” we are pleased for this modest victory on behalf of our nation’s most vulnerable students.”

*The Coalition for Teaching Quality is comprised of a broad cross-section of 90 local, state and national organizations representing civil rights, disability, parent, student, community and education groups. Formed in reaction to a provision that allowed teachers in training to be identified under federal law as “highly qualified” and concentrated in low-income, high need schools, this coalition has developed a new, comprehensive framework for teaching quality that will allow the nation to put a fully-prepared and effective teacher in every classroom.*