

**REP. PASCRELL APPLAUDS RENEWAL OF FEDERAL AND STATE SUPPORTED EDUCATION PROGRAM TO HELP PATERSON STUDENTS SUCCEED IN COLLEGE**

*Announcement of \$47.9 million through the federal GEAR-UP program marks beginning of a new six-year cycle of helping local at-risk students develop skills for college*

WASHINGTON – Calling it a proactive approach to better ensuring Paterson students' future success, U.S. Rep. Bill Pascrell, Jr. (D-NJ-8) today applauded \$47.9 million in federal and state grants to 58 New Jersey schools, including six in Paterson. The funds, administered through the federal Gaining Early Awareness and Readiness for Undergraduate Programs (GEAR UP) program, will be used to improve students' chances of getting into college.

"Federal investment in education is vital to our future economic prosperity," said Pascrell, a former educator and Paterson School Board member. "Americans who attended college with the help of the GI Bill helped create the most prosperous nation in history. This funding will help our students reach their true academic potential. Those who continue their education by going to college will have a greater chance of success having had the support and skills development this program will provide."

"Our school district's vision is to be a leader in educating New Jersey's urban youth and our mission is to prepare every child to succeed in college and their future career," said Paterson Public Schools' State District Superintendent Dr. Donnie Evans. "We are extremely thankful for this continued support to help the children of Paterson realize their dreams and goals."

"Access to the jobs of the 21st Century requires a college education. Pre-college programs, such as GEAR-UP, help ensure that students enter college and complete their education, said Dr. Steven Rose, president of Passaic County Community College (PCCC). "Previous pre-college programs administered by Passaic County Community College have resulted in 100% of participants entering college."

Clarence Wright, director of PCCC's Urban Consortium, said that he has been working with the GEAR UP/College Bound program long enough to see its results.

"This program has an impact on students' lives," said Mr. Wright. "We know of the obstacles they have had to overcome in order to prepare for and attend college. They come back and tell us that this program has been a tremendous asset. Now we have the opportunity to continue to provide these services for the next six years. It makes all the work that we do worthwhile."

The funding is comprised of \$23.9 million in federal GEAR UP monies plus \$24 million in matching contributions provided by New Jersey colleges participating in the program, including Passaic County Community College.

The six Paterson schools designated by the N.J. Department of Higher Education to receive the funds are PS 2; PS 6; PS 10; East Side High School; John F. Kennedy High School and International High School. The funding amounts for each school have not yet been determined, although previously the Paterson Public Schools have received annual allocations of \$313,200 from federal GEAR UP funds, matched by \$321,145 from the state and another \$185,000 from Passaic County Community College.

The six Paterson schools have participated in the six-year GEAR UP program since 2005. This funding announcement marks Paterson schools' beginning of a new six year commitment in the program. The new cycle begins in September 2012.

In Paterson, the GEAR UP/College Bound program is coordinated by Passaic County Community College and is run in two components – one for the middle schools and one for the high schools.

The middle school program is conducted after school at PS 2, PS, 6 and PS 10. Participating students receive academic support, tutoring and preparation for the state's ASK-8 standardized test, which tests 8th-grade students' competency for high school.

The high school program is conducted at Passaic County Community College's Paterson campus, two days a week after school plus Saturdays from 8:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. Students also attend for six weeks during the summer. The program reinforces students' academic skills, prepares them for the SAT test and exposes them to different college environments through field trips to neighboring colleges and universities. Guest speakers representing different careers are often brought into the program.

Among the eligibility requirements students must demonstrate to participate in the GEAR UP/College Bound program is qualification for the free or reduced lunch program. Students and parents are also interviewed by program coordinators in order to assess the family's desire for the student to attend college.

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