STATEMENT OF ALBERT SHANKER, PRESIDENT, AMERICAN FEDERATION OF TEACHERS, WASHINGTON, D.C.

Mr. Shanker. Mr. Chairman, Senator Stafford, thank you very much for this opportunity. I wish to thank you, Mr. Chairman, for your concerned interest in pursuit of this matter, which is so important.

Who would have thought a few years ago that the two organizations representing about 95 percent of America's teachers would be willing to accept the concept that you can create a distinction among teachers that some are certified and some are not certified and that that distinction might be used in such a way in schools as to reorganize those schools, create different roles for teachers, create different incentives, create different systems of compensation, depending upon the willingness of the parties at the local and State level? Truly a revolution and an opportunity that needs to be seized, especially at this time.

We have followed the teacher demographics, and we know what is happening. In the next six or seven years, about one-half of the teachers of this country will either be retiring or leaving for other reasons. That is about 1.2 million that will be leaving. We will need about 23 percent of all the college graduates, each and every year, to enter this field.

A few years ago, at the time of the beginning of the
various reports, there were only about four percent of the students in college who said they were heading your way. A few years later, it went up to six percent. Now, it's about 10 percent, which is an indication that the demonstrations of concern by governors, by various task forces, and, indeed, by Federal officials also has brought more people into the line eager and willing to become teachers. We are still, though, only about halfway there in terms of need. And we are not talking in these numbers about the quality of those who are lined up. Are we getting our fair share of the best and brightest that come into our institutions?

The development of an instrument of certification is the most important point of leverage that we have at the current time. It will say to large numbers of youngsters who are thinking of coming our way that teaching will no longer be a flat profession, where you have achieved everything the minute you walked in, that there is no place to go, that the only way you can advance is to get out of it and do something else—whether it is school administration or school supervision or out of education altogether. It will be a message to people who could be top-notch in any field that they can be top-notch and recognized in this one, that they need not go to other fields because there are opportunities for recognition and advancement whereas there are not in this one.
In other words, it has the potential to alter the demographic problems that we are facing in this very important field.

I think it is also important to say that at this time when, in a very short period of time, we are actually going to be filling about half the positions, that it make a tremendous difference whether those positions get filled by people who are in the bottom quartile of all college graduates, or whether they are filled by people who are in the first, second and third in terms of a decent spread of talents and abilities.

We will be living with this teacher work force for quite a long period in the future. I think even if this Board were able to raise the money and raise it quickly, there is good reason for the Federal Government to be a partner. I think the message that it sends to those who are in college as to the national concern and the importance of this that we hear so often when different people are asked, "What do you do, and what do you do?" Are people are very proud of what they do. But the phrase that comes over and over again that we hear is, "Well, I am only a teacher." If somehow we could get a different feeling teachers would have about themselves and about their profession and this Federal commitment and Federal involvement as a very important step in that direction.
But the other part of that step, very closely related to it, as many others have said today, is the notion that it is time that others stopped setting down the rules and regulations from above. That is part of a problem that we have in industry, it is a problem that we have in government, and almost all the books we get today about excellence and how to become competitive deal with the issue of how do you get people to participate, to buy in, to feel part of something, to give more of themselves than one gives in a bureaucracy or in most institutions.

That is why it is so important that these standards be developed and set by a board that is made up of a majority of people within the profession. You do not want something that three or five or seven years from now the overwhelming majority of people out there say, "Well, who developed that? Who came up with it?" The notion that, once again, someone else is doing it to us. We would like to be able to go out and say: These were teachers, the majority of them, yes, there were others, there were governors, and there were business people and others representing the public, but this whole thing was put together and developed by the profession itself. It is something you can and should be proud of, and it is something that you can support. It is a parallel development to what historically took place in other professions.

Now I would like to address an issue that has been implicitly raised here, that may be on your minds. That question is, is there
anything new in this endeavor, don't we already know what works in education, don't we already have fine standards and assessment instruments? First, I would like to ask,

Now, as to how much we know, if we know as much as some people have asserted, have heard, then the question comes, why are the results so bad? And they, indeed, are very bad. We know more than we are using, so it is important that we get what is known here, widely used, started. But there is an awful lot that we do not know, and it is time for us to face up to this fact in education. Second, the important issue here is that there is no current instrument that is nationally available that makes any sense in terms of either employment of teachers or certification of teachers or licensing of teachers. The instruments that are around now that are nationally available are basically literacy exams, minimal competency and licensing standards, which will continue to be State standards, are largely governed by supply and demand. There is not a single classroom in America that is ever empty, so always go out and hire the best available person, no matter what qualifications or lack of qualifications. And given the fact that our schools are both educational and custodial, that will continue to be the case.

So we need something that is separate from the hiring standards, and something that is separate from the licensing standards, and we need an instrument that is not just a simple, w simplicistically derived teaching skills minimum competency examination on reading or arithmetic. We need something which does deal with depth in a number of academic areas and not mere minimum competence. We need something which shows an understanding of children and their
Development psychology and the materials, the tools of the trade, the grouping of youngsters, the pedagogical aspects of education.

Then, of course, basically this is a performing profession. You can get your Ph.D. in Shakespeare, but you may not be a very good actor or actress. And part of this is how does a person put this together in terms of performance?

I would like to conclude by saying that there is an awful lot of excitement out there. There is a willingness to buy in. That will not last forever. If this thing gets dragged out because we are out there raising a lot of money, and if it takes 10 years or 15 years to do, people are going to start yawning. They will not believe in it any more.

We need to go quickly but not so quickly that we put something out that nobody believes in. So it has got to be done right, and it has got to be done right the first time. But we should not be missing this opportunity, this excitement, this willingness on the part of a massive number of teachers to accept some radical and revolutionary changes. We need your help on that.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Shanker follows:]