



## NEW JERSEY SENATE

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PRESIDENT PRO TEMPORE

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April 24, 2019

Secretary Zakiya Smith Ellis  
Office of the Secretary of Higher Education  
1 John Fitch Plaza,  
10th Floor, PO Box 542,  
Trenton, NJ 08625-0542

Dear Secretary Smith Ellis,

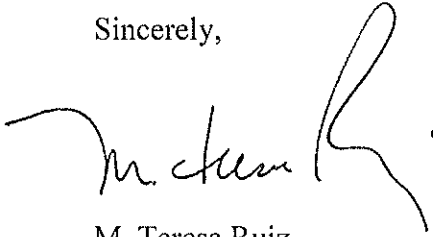
Earlier this month, I met with Deputy Secretary Diana Gonzalez and Educational Opportunity Fund (EOF) Executive Director Hasani Carter to discuss my concerns with the EOF program's regulations regarding funding priority tiers for students and the failure of these regulations to account for changes in our State's education policy. Specifically, the current regulations consider a high school student who has completed a dual enrollment program and earned an associate's degree in the lowest EOF funding priority category. If such student had not taken advantage of the dual enrollment program, that individual would have been in the second highest priority funding tier. This creates a perverse incentive to not participate in the college readiness programs the Legislature and various administrations have strived to establish and encourage. No student should have to choose between jeopardizing EOF funding and college readiness opportunities.

The disadvantage created for dual enrollment high school students highlighted here is one example, raising the potential that other areas of the EOF regulations may not align with the modern policy goals of the State to expand educational access while increasing affordability.

I intend to introduce a resolution next month encouraging your office to address the dual enrollment funding priority tier placement issue and to further review the existing EOF regulations to identify any other potential conflicts with encouraging participation in college readiness programs and to modernize the regulations to reflect the State's current educational policy goals.

I hope your office can undertake this regulatory review before such action is finalized by the Legislature to ensure the EOF program is fully serving the students who depend on it most.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "M. Teresa Ruiz". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large, stylized "R" at the end.

M. Teresa Ruiz  
President Pro Tempore