September 25, 2012

Dear Colleagues:

Unlike hurricanes and other natural hazards, earthquakes strike suddenly, without warning, and can have disastrous and far-reaching effects. As you may recall, on August 23, 2011, a 5.8 magnitude earthquake hit Mineral, Virginia. This unexpected earthquake, felt as far north as New England and as far south as Georgia, reminded many how an earthquake can occur anywhere at any time. This earthquake occurred on the first day of school for many students and emphasizes the importance of school safety and being prepared for the unexpected.

The 2012 "Great ShakeOut" will be conducted on October 18. This drill, which can be conducted in as little as 90 seconds, provides a timely and relevant opportunity for the entire community to get prepared, practice what to do to be safe ("Drop, Cover, and Hold On"), and learn what emergency plans need to be improved. Schools, colleges, universities, businesses, organizations, and households will all participate.

This year's ShakeOut introduces Great ShakeOut drills in Alaska, Arizona, Puerto Rico, Washington, New Zealand, southern Italy, and the regional "Great Southeast ShakeOut" with participation from the District of Columbia, Georgia, Maryland, North Carolina, South Carolina, and Virginia. These new drills join British Columbia, Canada; California (in its fifth year); Guam; Idaho; Nevada; and Oregon as they again participate in the ShakeOut drills.

We strongly encourage you and your school or organization to register at www.ShakeOut.org, and join the **more than 14 million participants, including thousands of schools,** who will participate in these drills. You can register even if your school, college, university, or organization is not in a participating state, and be counted in this nationwide event.

We cannot emphasize enough the importance of events like the ShakeOut, and how critical they are for school preparedness. In a recent 2011 earthquake preparedness survey, ***fewer than half of education institutions indicated that they train staff or students in earthquake preparedness***. The ShakeOut offers a unique opportunity for schools to train students and staff on preparedness and to increase awareness of the "Drop, Cover, Hold On" method for protecting ourselves during an earthquake.

The Resources section of each ShakeOut website provides drill manuals for K-12 schools, colleges, universities, and organizations, as well as other materials to plan, prepare, and promote your drill. Additionally, the U.S. Department of Education's Readiness and Emergency Management for Schools (REMS) Technical Assistance Center website, http://rems.ed.gov, provides and disseminates information, training and resources about emergency management to

help schools, school districts, and institutions of higher education learn more about creating and maintaining emergency management plans. Additional information on all hazard planning and response can be found on FEMA's Ready campaign website, www.ready.gov, where you can also join the National Preparedness Coalition. Sign up today and Pledge to Prepare!

All schools, organizations, and households play a critical role in helping our Nation become better prepared for any disaster or emergency. Schools are especially important in providing our next generation of leaders with the tools to help teach their friends, families, and peers how to be ready for an earthquake and can help our entire country become more resilient in the face of a disaster. Participating in ShakeOut and other drills (and encouraging others to join you!) is a great way for your whole community to promote emergency preparedness.

If you have any questions regarding the ShakeOut, please visit www.ShakeOut.org or e-mail info@shakeout.org.

Sincerely,

Arne Duncan
Secretary of Education

Janet Napolitano
Secretary of Homeland Security