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THE STATE OF AMERICAN EDUCATION

HEARING

BEFORE THE

COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION AND WORKFORCE
U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

ONE HUNDRED NINETEENTH CONGRESS

FIRST SESSION

HEARING HELD IN WASHINGTON, DC, FEBRUARY 5, 2025

Serial No. 119–1

Printed for the use of the Committee on Education and Workforce

Available via: *edworkforce.house.gov* or *www.govinfo.gov*

U.S. GOVERNMENT PUBLISHING OFFICE
61–137 PDF WASHINGTON : 2025

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THE STATE OF AMERICAN EDUCATION

Wednesday, February 5, 2025

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,
COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION AND WORKFORCE,
Washington, DC.

The Committee met, pursuant to notice, at 10:16 a.m., in Room 2175, Rayburn House Office Building, Hon. Tim Walberg, (Chairman of the Committee) presiding.

Present: Representatives Walberg, Wilson, Foxx, Thompson, Grothman, Stefanik, Allen, Owens, Miller, Kiley, Rulli, Onder, Mackenzie, Baumgartner, Harris, Messmer, Scott, Courtney, Bonamici, Takano, Adams, Norcross, McBath, Hayes, Casar, Lee, and Mannion.

Staff present: Mindy Barry, General Counsel; Solomon Chen, Professional Staff Member; Sheila Havenner, Director of Information Technology; Amy Raaf Jones, Director of Education and Human Services Policy; Libby Kearns, Press Assistant; Isaiah Knox, Legislative Assistant; Campbell Ladd, Staff Assistant; R.J. Laukitis, Staff Director; Georgie Littlefair, Clerk; R.J. Martin, Professional Staff Member; Audra McGeorge, Communications Director; Eli Mitchell, Legislative Assistant; Ethan Pann, Deputy Press Secretary and Digital Director; Ian Prince, Professional Staff Member; Kane Riddell, Staff Assistant; Sara Robertson, Press Secretary; Chance Russell, Economist and Policy Advisor; Brad Thomas, Deputy Director of Education and Human Services Policy; Ann Vogel, Director of Operations; Ali Watson, Director of Member Services; Amaris Benavidez, Minority Professional Staff; Ilana Brunner, Minority General Counsel; David Dailey, Minority Chief of Staff; Bryan Gonzalez, Minority Grad Intern; Rashage Green, Minority Director of Education Policy & Counsel; Brandom Hernandez, Minority CHCI Fellow; Christian Haines, Minority General Counsel; Jo Howard, Minority Grad Intern; Emanual Kimble, Minority Professional Staff; Samantha Wilkerson, Professional Staff Member; Stephanie Lalle, Minority Communications Director; Hannah Seligman, Minority Legal Intern; Raiyana Malone, Minority Press Secretary; Kevin McDermott, Minority Director of Labor Policy; Marie McGrew, Minority Press Assistant; Ben Noenickx, Minority Intern; Kathleen Pan, Minority APAICS Fellow; Eleazar Padilla, Minority Staff Assistant; Veronique Pluviose, Minority Staff Director; Elizabeth Tomoloju, Minority Intern; Banyon Vassar, Minority Director of IT.

Chairman WALBERG. Well, good morning. The Committee on Education and the Workforce will—who typed that up for me? Take that "the" out. Education and Workforce will come to order. I note

that a quorum is present, and without objection the Chair is authorized to call a recess at any time, and may with personal preference, or personal preference, I would put something in at this point as well.

There is no more important place for any of us to be this morning related to our legislative work than in this Committee. Education is key to everything that goes on in this country, especially now and forever more. I am glad that we are all part of this A Committee.

Good morning. It is a pleasure to welcome you to the first hearing of the House Committee on Education and Workforce in the 119th Congress. This morning, we are here to discuss the State of American education. Unfortunately, we are here to discuss problems that have resulted and continue to go on in education as well.

Many students are failing to graduate from high school, or college, with the skills needed to be successful. In too many places education in core subjects like math and reading is being replaced by indoctrination. That must change. I am pleased to see that the Trump administration is taking excellent steps to restore common sense, personal responsibility, and parental choice through the education system.

This is just beginning, and it is disruptive. It will have to be to do the significant change. In K–12 education, there is much work that needs to be done. Results from the most recent national assessment of educational progress show that students have still not recovered from the pandemic, if that is the key excuse.

Students are still scoring at lower levels in math and reading than they were in 2019. One reason for these shocking scores is that many schools have lost focus on teaching the core skills needed for a successful career. While many teachers have done an admirable job helping students recover from learning loss, many systems have become fixated on teaching divisive ideologies.

Unfortunately, these efforts have been fueled by the Federal Government itself. In 2024, researchers with Parents Defending Education found that Biden-Harris administration spent over 1 billion dollars in DEI grants. There is positive news to celebrate in the K–12 arena, however, school choice has grown dramatically in recent years.

More than 1 million students are benefiting from private school choice programs, which is about double the number of students from just 3 years ago. Additionally, we have seen a grass roots movement of parent involvement. Decades of research has shown that parental involvement, regardless of socioeconomic status or background, has a strong impact on student achievement and long-term success.

It is encouraging to see so many parents get more involved in their school systems, as well as the growth of parent advocacy organizations that support them. Their work has been vital to making schools function better.

Turning to higher education, we have seen rampant antisemitism and stifling of speech on campuses, fueled by bloated DEI bureaucracies. America's adversaries are sending billions of foreign funds to schools to manipulate them. All of this has resulted in too many students being told what to think, instead of how to think.

It is also the case that our higher education financing system is at a critical inflection point. President Biden attempted to spend 1 trillion dollars through executive actions on the Federal student loan bail-out program alone. Transferring student loan responsibilities onto the backs of taxpayers will not solve the underlying issue that the Federal student loan program is irreparably broken.

What is needed now, more than ever, are real lasting reforms that protect both students and taxpayers from debt they cannot afford. Our Committee has hard work ahead of us to ensure our Nation's higher education system remains the crown jewel of the world.

We also must address our broken workforce system. We have about 8 million unfilled jobs in our country, so there is clearly a mismatch between the skills our workforce has and the skills our employers need. Unfortunately, the Nation's workforce system authorized under Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act, or WIOA, is failing to fill in the gap.

Fortunately, our Committee made tremendous strides last Congress in addressing these challenges. A Stronger Workforce for America Act passed the House with strong bipartisan support, and after further negotiations with the Senate last year was poised for enactment.

I want to thank former Chairwoman Virginia Foxx and Ranking Member Bobby Scott for their leadership on that bill. I look forward to taking it back up in this new Congress. While we have great challenges ahead of us, we also have great opportunities in front of us, and I look forward to working with all of our members to meet these challenges.

That process starts today, and I am excited for the productive conversation we will have with this great panel of witnesses. With that, I yield to my friend, and Ranking Member, Mr. Scott.

[The statement of Chairman Walberg follows:]

COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION & WORKFORCE
CHAIRMAN TIM WALBERG

COMMITTEE STATEMENT

Opening Statement of Rep. Tim Walberg (R-MI), Chairman
Committee on Education and Workforce
Hearing: "The State of American Education"
February 5, 2025

(As prepared for delivery)

Good morning, it is a pleasure to welcome you to the first hearing of the House Committee on Education and Workforce in the 119th Congress.

This morning, we're here to discuss the state of American education. Unfortunately, many students are failing to graduate from high school or college with the skills needed to be successful. In too many places, education in core subjects like math and reading is being replaced by indoctrination. That must change. I'm pleased to see that the Trump administration is taking excellent steps to restore common sense, personal responsibility, and parental choice to our education system. But this is just the beginning.

In K-12 education, there is much work that needs to be done. Results from the most recent National Assessment of Educational Progress show that students have still not recovered from the pandemic; students are still scoring at lower levels in math and reading than they were in 2019.

One reason for these shocking scores is that many schools have lost focus on teaching the core skills needed for a successful career. While many teachers have done an admirable job helping students recover from learning loss, many systems have become fixated on teaching divisive ideologies. Unfortunately, these efforts have been fueled by the federal government itself. In 2024, researchers with Parents Defending Education found that the Biden-Harris administration spent over $1 billion on DEI grants.

There is positive news to celebrate in the K-12 arena, however. School choice has grown dramatically in recent years. More than 1 million students are benefiting from private school choice programs, which is about double the number of students from just three years ago.

Additionally, we've seen a grassroots movement of parent involvement. Decades of research has shown that parental involvement, regardless of socioeconomic status or background, has a strong impact on student achievement and long-term success. It is encouraging to see so many parents get more involved in their school systems, as well as the growth of parent advocacy organizations that support them. Their work has been vital to making schools function better.

Turning to higher education, we have seen rampant antisemitism and stifling of speech on campuses fueled by bloated DEI bureaucracies. And America's adversaries are sending billions of foreign funds to schools to manipulate them. All of this has resulted in too many students being told what to think instead of how to think.

It is also the case that our higher education financing system is at a critical inflection point. President Biden attempted to spend $1 trillion through executive actions on the federal student loan program alone Transferring student loan responsibilities onto the backs of taxpayers will not solve the underlying issue that the federal student loan program is irreparably broken. What is needed now, more than ever, are real, lasting reforms that protect both students and taxpayers from debt they can't afford. Our Committee has hard work ahead of us to ensure our nation's higher education system remains the crown jewel of the world.

We also must address our broken workforce system. We have about 8 million unfilled jobs in our country, so there is clearly a mismatch between the skills our workforce has and the skills our employers need. Unfortunately, the nation's workforce system, authorized under the *Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act*, or WIOA, is failing to fill in the gap.

Fortunately, our Committee made tremendous strides last Congress in addressing these challenges. *A Stronger Workforce for America Act* passed the House with strong, bipartisan support and, after further negotiations with the Senate late last year, was poised for enactment. I want to thank former Chairwoman Virginia Foxx and Ranking Member Scott for their leadership on that bill, and I look forward to taking it back up in the new Congress.

While we have great challenges ahead of us, we also have great opportunities in front of us, and I look forward to working with all of our Members to meet these challenges. That process starts today, and I am excited for the productive conversation we will have with this great panel of witnesses.

Mr. SCOTT. Thank you, Chairman Walberg. Good morning, everyone, and thank you for our witnesses for joining us today, and thank you, Mr. Chairman, for convening this hearing.

I would like to first start with the elephant in the room, and there is current reporting that President Trump plans to issue an executive order to eliminate critical programs in the Department of Education and call on Congress to eliminate the entire Department.

Then I recall that that is exactly what the Project 2025 said the President should do. He said that on page 319 of Project 2025. The irony is not lost on me that we are here to discuss the State of American education, while our current administration is actively discussing how to dismantle the main Federal agency responsible for the safe quality education for all students.

According to polls, the majority of the voters oppose the abolition of the Department of Education. I also know that I, and every Democrat will do what we can to ensure that the Department continues. Now, the issue at hand is reflected in the latest national assessment of educational progress data. Schools are struggling to make up the lost time in the classroom following the COVID–19 pandemic.

Achievement gaps, which existed before the pandemic, have widened. According to that assessment, math and reading gaps between higher and lower performing students continue to rise, as black students continue to be more than 10 points behind their white peers in all subjects.

In 2021, Democrats passed the largest, one-time investment in education in the history of the United States, in the American Rescue Plan Act, to provide schools with resources they needed to reopen classrooms safely, and make up for lost time due to the pandemic. Without this investment, we would undoubtedly be in a worse situation than today.

The Rescue Plan Act was only a band-aid on the larger issue of underfunding in schools, and it is abundantly clear that we need sustained Federal investment over time to overcome decades of underfunding.

Unfortunately, instead of investing in our children, Republicans are stuck on proposals that only create more challenges for students. Consider that the first education bill we considered this Congress targets indeed, bullies, transgender youth. Also, my Republican colleagues have misrepresented programs intended to expand diversity, equity, inclusion as the problem in education.

Republicans have threatened to ban books, police bathrooms, take away funds from communities that need it most. I am sad to report the dministration is promoting a warped vision of DEI, discrimination, erasure and inequity.

This all serves to distract Americans so that they will not notice the privatization of American education systems with taxpayer funds going to private schools, the resegregation of public schools,

the erosion of services for students with disabilities, and cuts to student loan program, and distracts from the fact that the price of eggs is going up.

While some folks may be hollering about imagined DEI problems, many in the public will fail to notice how the taxpayer's money is being siphoned away from public education and the student loan program to pay for tax cuts for the wealthy and well connected.

Mr. Chairman, we can all agree that every student in this country should have access to safe, welcoming, well-funding learning environment, and that begins with eliminating disparities in education with sustained Federal funding.

This Congress, Committee Democrats will reintroduce legislation, such as Rebuild America's Schools Act, which will make critical investments to repair and rebuild school facilities, particularly in high need areas.

The Equity and Inclusion and Enforcement Act, which will restore private right of action for students, parents and local civil rights groups to bring discrimination claims based on disparity impact under Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, and the Strengthen Diversity Act, which would provide resources to states and school districts who want to voluntarily develop schools' plans to integrate their schools.

We have to take steps to lower the cost of higher education for students and families, and to that end we will also reintroduce the Lowering Obstacles to Achievement Now, the LOAN Act, which will lower the costs of college for current and future student borrowers and their families by making critical reforms to the student aid system, including doubling the Pell Grant, improving public service loan forgiveness programs, and making loans more affordable and accessible.

To that end, to promise our colleagues and students across the country that we will not go along with programs to dismantle our education system. We will fight any attempt to dismantle the Department, and so we do not know what the plan will be, but you can count on our opposition to any plan that will abolish the Department of Education and the programs in it.

To that end, Democrats will always be with the well-being of students, teachers and parents across the country. With that, Mr. Chairman, I yield back the balance of my time.

[The statement of Ranking Member Scott follows:]

ED & WORKFORCE DEMOCRATS

OPENING STATEMENT

House Committee on Education and Workforce
Ranking Member Robert C. "Bobby" Scott

Opening Statement of Ranking Member Robert C. "Bobby" Scott (VA-03)
Full Committee Hearing
"The State of American Education"
Wednesday, February 5, 2025 | 10:15 a.m.

Thank you, Chairman Walberg. Good morning, everyone, and thank you to our witnesses for joining us today. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, for convening this hearing.

I would first like to start with the elephant in the room. There is current reporting that President Trump plans to issue an executive order to eliminate critical programs at the Department of Education and call on Congress to eliminate the entire department. But then I recall that that's exactly what Project 2025 said the president should do — it said that on page 319 of Project 2025.

The irony is not lost on me that we are here to discuss the "state of American education" while the current Administration is actively discussing how to dismantle the main federal agency responsible for ensuring safe, quality education for all students. According to polls, the majority of voters oppose the abolition of the Department of Education. I also know that I, and every Democrat, will do what we can to ensure the Department continues.

Now to the issue at hand. As reflected in the latest National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) data, schools are struggling to make up for lost time in the classroom following the COVID-19 pandemic. Achievement gaps, which existed before the pandemic, have widened. According to that assessment, math and reading gaps between higher- and lower-performing students continue to rise, as Black students continue to be more than 10 points behind their white peers in all subjects.

In 2021, Democrats passed the largest one-time investment in education in the history of the United States in the *American Rescue Plan Act* (ARPA), to provide schools with the resources they needed to reopen classrooms safely and make up for lost time due to the pandemic. Without this investment, we would undoubtedly be in a worse situation today. However, the *American Rescue Plan Act* was only a band-aid on the larger issue of underfunding in schools. It is abundantly clear that we need sustained federal investment over time to overcome decades of underfunding.

Unfortunately, instead of investing in our children, Republicans are stuck on proposals that will only create more challenges for students. Consider that the first education bill we considered this Congress targets – indeed bullies – transgender youth. Also, my Republican colleagues have misrepresented programs intended to expand diversity, equity, and inclusion as a problem in education. Republicans have threatened to ban books, police bathrooms, and take away funds from communities that need them most. Simply put, the Administration is promoting a warped version of DEI – discrimination, erasure, and inequity.

This all serves to distract Americans so that they will not notice the privatization of the American education system with taxpayer funds going to private schools, the resegregation of public schools, the erosion of services

for students with disabilities, cuts to the student loan program, *and* distracts from the price of eggs going up. And while some folks may be hollering about imagined "DEI problems," many in the public will fail to notice how the taxpayers' money is being siphoned away from public education and the student loan program to pay for tax cuts for the wealthy and well-connected.

And so, Mr. Chairman, I know that we can all agree that every student in this country should have access to a safe, welcoming, and well-funded learning environment. That begins with eliminating disparities in education with sustained federal funding. This Congress, Committee Democrats will reintroduce legislation such as:

- the *Rebuild America's Schools Act*, which would make a critical investment to repair and rebuild school facilities—particularly in high-need areas.
- the *Equity and Inclusion Enforcement Act*, which would restore the private right of action for students, parents, and local civil rights groups to bring discrimination claims based on disparate impact under Title VI of the *Civil Rights Act of 1964*.
- And the *Strength in Diversity Act*, which would provide resources to states or school districts that want to voluntarily develop plans to integrate their schools.

We have to take steps to lower the cost of higher education for students and families. To that end, we'll also reintroduce the *Lowering Obstacles to Achievement Now (LOAN) Act*, which would lower the cost of college for current and future student borrowers and their families by making critical reforms to the student aid system, including doubling the Pell Grant, improving the Public Service Loan Forgiveness program, and making loans more affordable and accessible.

Allow me, to that end, to promise to my colleagues and students across the country, that we will not go along with programs to dismantle our education system. We will fight any attempt to dismantle the Department. We don't know what the plan will be, but count on our opposition to any plan that will abolish the Department of Education and the programs in it. To that end, Democrats will always be for the wellbeing of students, teachers, and parents across the country.

With that, Mr. Chairman, I yield back the balance of my time.

Chairman WALBERG. Thank you, gentleman. Pursuant to Committee Rule 8-C, all members who wish to insert written statements into the record may do so by submitting them to the Committee Clerk electronically in Microsoft Word format by 5 p.m., 14 days after the date of this hearing, which is February 19, 2025.

Without objection, the hearing record will remain open for 14 days to allow such statements and other extraneous material referenced during the hearing to be submitted for the official hearing record.

I will now turn to the introduction of our witnesses, we appreciate being here. Our first witness is Mrs. Nicole Neily, who is the

President of Parents Defending Education in Arlington, Virginia. Welcome.

Our next witness is Dr. Preston Cooper, who is a Senior Fellow at the American Enterprise Institute, located in Washington, DC. Welcome, Mr. Cooper.

Our third witness is Mrs. Janai Nelson, who is President and Director-Counsel, of the NAACP Legal Defense Fund in Washington, DC, welcome.

Our final witness is Mr. Johnny C. Taylor, Jr., who is President and CEO of the Society for Human Resource Management in Alexandria, Virginia. Welcome.

We thank you for all being here today and look forward to your testimony. I would like to remind the witnesses that we have read your written statements, which will appear in our full hearing record.

I would ask that you each limit your oral presentation to a 3-minute summary of your written statement. The clock will count down from 3 minutes because the Committee Members have many questions for you, and we would like to spend as much time as possible on those questions with your answers.

Pursuant to Committee Rule 8-D, and Committee practice, however, we will not cutoff your testimony until you go too far. I also would like to remind the witnesses to be aware of their responsibility to provide accurate information to the Committee. First, I will recognize Ms. Neily, welcome.

STATEMENT OF MRS. NICOLE NEILY, PRESIDENT, PARENTS DEFENDING EDUCATION, ARLINGTON, VIRGINIA.

Mrs. NEILY. Chairman Walberg, Ranking Member Scott, and distinguished members of the Committee, thank you for inviting me. My name is Nicole Neily, and I am President and Founder of Parents Defending Education, and the Executive Director of PDE Action.

American education is in crisis. For far too long U.S. schools have focused on everything but educating children, and as last week's NAEP scores have shown, our children are bearing the brunt of these bad decisions.

Schools are focused on the wrong priorities. Identity politics permeate districts across America in word and deed. Children are regularly treated differently based on race. Color-conscious pedagogy, which considers colorblindness to be negative, is omnipresent in America's colleges of education.

Eighty years after Brown v. Broad of Education, segregated activities persist in the guise of affinity groups, where students and teachers are included or excluded because of skin color. The diversity industrial complex promotes programs like this, conducting equity audits and hosting professional development trainings.

Districts pay DEI consultants millions per year, incentivized by the billion dollars in education grants awarded by the Biden administration in the past 4 years. In the wake of October 7th, antisemitism spiked in both colleges and K–12 schools alike.

From lesson plans about settler-colonialism to swastikas on mirrors dismissed as Buddhist religious symbols, districts lackadaisical

response to Jew hatred bore a sharp contrast to the antiracism fervor following George Floyd's murder.

Foreign funding remains problematic. Our investigation into Confucious classrooms found districts around the country with ties to CCP linked entities, and similar programming by the Qatar Foundation also exists. The full scope of foreign influence in K–12 merits investigation and is also a significant problem in higher ed, which the Deterrent Act I note tackles head-on.

Over the past several years, merit has been sacrificed on the altar of equity. Rather than challenging talented students to strive for greatness, schools are eliminating gifted and talented programs and AP classes, so that all students remain at the same level. We are witnessing the soviet-ification of American schools in real time.

Finally, schools are unsafe. Under the guise of breaking the school to prison pipeline, districts have removed school resource officers, and moved toward non-punitive restorative justice, making classroom management impossible.

Families are treated as the enemy. Trust between families and districts is fractured. Rather than partnering with parents, schools work against them. Families are being shut out of their children's lives. PDE has identified over 1,100 districts around the country impacting more than 12 million children and counting, with parental exclusion policies, which State that parents do not have a right to know their child's gender at school.

Districts should not keep secrets from families. As a country we spend billions of dollars on mental health for students, so why are schools telling kids that their parents' love is conditional, and maybe it is time to lead a double life?

Over the past 4 years, parental rights were routinely disrespected by the Federal Government. When parents spoke up, they were attacked by the media and DOJ. Through our FOIAS, PDE discovered that the National School Boards Association worked with Department of Education officials to smear American families.

As George Washington Carver said, "Education is the key to unlock the golden door of freedom." The country's equity experiment has been an unequivocal failure, and it is time to move on.

Let us refocus American schools on core subjects, prioritizing excellence and creating opportunities for those who work hard. Although battered, the American education system is not beyond repair, but to get things back on track it is going to take a genuine partnership between families and educators. Thank you.

[The Statement of Mrs. Neily follows:]

Testimony of Nicole Neily
President, Parents Defending Education
Before the House Committee on Education & the Workforce
February 5, 2025

"The State of American Education"

Chairman Walberg, Ranking Member Scott, and distinguished members of the Committee: thank you for inviting me today.

My name is Nicole Neily, and I'm the president and founder of Parents Defending Education. I'm also the executive director of PDE Action.

American education is in crisis. For far too long, US schools have focused on everything BUT educating children – and as last week's NAEP scores have shown, our children are the ones bearing the brunt of these bad decisions.

Schools are focused on the wrong priorities.

Identity politics permeate districts across America in word and deed. Children are regularly treated differently based on race. Color-conscious pedagogy (which considers colorblindness to be negative) is omnipresent in America's colleges of education[1]. Eighty years after *Brown v. Board of Education*, segregated activities persist in the guise of "affinity groups," where students and teachers are included – or excluded – because of skin color.

The diversity-industrial complex promotes programs like this, conducting "equity audits" and hosting professional development trainings. Districts pay DEI consultants millions per year – incentivized by the $1 billion in education grants awarded by the Biden administration, as well as other state and federal agencies.

In the wake of October 7th, antisemitism spiked in both colleges and K-12 schools. From lesson plans about settler-colonialism[2] to swastikas on mirrors dismissed as "Buddhist religious

[1] Parents Defending Education, "CorruptED," August 8, 2024. https://defendinged.org/investigations/corrupted/
[2] Luke Rosiak, "Virginia Teacher Who Makes Kids Criticize Israel Is Daughter Of Imam At Al Qaeda-Linked Mosque," Daily Wire, October 1, 2024. https://www.dailywire.com/news/daughter-of-imam-at-al-qaeda-linked-mosque-is-a-teacher-who-makes-students-criticize-israel

symbols,"[3] districts' lackadaisical response to Jew-hatred bore a sharp contrast to the antiracism fervor following George Floyd's murder.

Foreign funding remains problematic; a PDE investigation into Confucius Classrooms[4] found districts around the country with ties to CCP-linked entities, and similar programming by the Qatar Foundation[5] also exists. The full scope of foreign influence in K-12 merits investigation and is also a significant problem in higher education, which the DETERRENT Act tackles head-on.

Over the past several years, merit has been sacrificed on the altar of "equity." Rather than challenging talented students to strive for greatness, schools are eliminating gifted and talented programs and AP classes so that all students remain at the same level. We are witnessing the soviet-ification of American schools in real time.

Finally, schools are unsafe. Under the guise of "breaking the school to prison pipeline," districts have removed school resource officers and moved towards non-punitive "restorative justice"[6] – making classroom management impossible.[7]

Families are treated as the enemy.

Trust between families and districts is fractured. Rather than partnering *with* parents, schools now work *against* them.

Families are being shut out of their children's lives. PDE has identified over 1,100 districts around the country (impacting more than 12 million children) with "parental exclusion policies," which state that parents don't have a right to know their child's gender at school.

Districts should not keep secrets from families. As a country, we spend billions on mental health interventions for students – so why are schools telling kids that their parents' love is conditional, and that it might be time to lead a double life?

Over the past four years, parental rights were routinely disrespected from the federal government down to the local level. When parents spoke up, they were attacked by the media

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[3] Sue Dremann, "Sequoia Union High School District responds to criticism over swastika drawings," RWC Pulse, November 9, 2023. https://www.rwcpulse.com/express-newsletter-content/2023/11/09/sequoia-union-high-school-district-responds-to-criticism-over-swastika-drawings/

[4] Parents Defending Education, "Little Red Classrooms," July 26, 2023. https://defendinged.org/investigations/little-red-classrooms-china-infiltration-of-american-k-12-schools/

[5] Frannie Block, "NYC Public School Wipes Israel from the Map," The Free Press, January 11, 2024. https://www.thefp.com/p/nyc-public-school-wipes-israel-from-the-map

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and the Department of Justice. Through our FOIAs, PDE discovered that the National School Boards Association worked with Department of Education officials to smear American families.

As George Washington Carver said, "Education is the key to unlock the golden door of freedom." The country's equity experiment has been an unequivocal failure, and it's time to move on. Let's refocus American schools on core subjects, prioritizing excellence and creating opportunities for those who work hard. Although battered, the American education system is not beyond repair – but to get things back on track, it's going to take a genuine partnership between families and schools.

Chairman WALBERG. Thank you, Mrs. Neily, and thank you for setting the standard for 3 minutes. I now recognize Dr. Cooper.

STATEMENT OF DR. PRESTON COOPER, SENIOR FELLOW, AMERICAN ENTERPRISE INSTITUTE, WASHINGTON, D.C.

Mr. COOPER. Good morning, Chairman Walberg, Ranking Member Scott, and distinguished members of the Committee. Thank you for the opportunity to testify today on the State of postsecondary education and the Federal Government's role in shaping it.

My name is Preston Cooper, and I am a Senior Fellow focusing on the economics of higher education at the American Enterprise Institute. Americans are losing confidence in the higher education system. According to the Wall Street Journal, 56 percent of Americans believe that a 4-year college education is no longer worth the cost.

This changing sentiment has translated into a 12 percent drop in college enrollment since 2010. To be sure, higher education can be a great investment for students, but all too often, that investment does not pay off. When students pay too much in tuition, or do not learn the skills they need to get a good job, or even fail to complete their degree programs at all, the decision to pursue higher education becomes less of an investment and more of a gamble.

The Federal Government heavily subsidizes higher education programs with little return on investment for students. Between 2018 and 2022, I estimate that at least 37 billion dollars in Pell grants, and 86 billion dollars in Federal student loans flowed to degree programs that did not lead to a return on investment for students.

When students pay too much for college, relative to what they learned leaving school, it becomes harder to pay down their loan balances. Before the pandemic, 11 million borrowers were either in default, or delinquent on their debts. Millions more were taking advantage of income-driven repayment, loan forbearance, and other options to reduce or eliminate their monthly payments.

These higher rates of loan non-payments mean that the Congressional Budget Office expects that taxpayers will lose 223 billion dollars on student loans newly originated between 2025 and 2034, and that is to say nothing of expected losses on outstanding loans.

While former President Biden's largely unsuccessful efforts to cancel student loans on mass, did little to help matters, the student loan programs' problems predate his administration. Fortunately, Congress has a unique opportunity to address many of the longstanding problems in the Federal student loan program.

The College Cost Reduction Act introduced last year, takes a three-pronged approach to fixing things, reforming the student loan repayment system, imposing sensible caps on borrowing, and holding colleges accountable for how well they serve students. Postsecondary education in America suffers from high costs, uneven financial value, and a chaotic student loan system that creates more problems than it solves.

Addressing these challenges would represent a strong first step toward restoring public confidence in American higher education. Thank you for your attention, and I look forward to your questions.

[The Statement of Dr. Preston Cooper follows:]

Statement before the US House Committee on Education and the Workforce
On The State of American Education

High Costs, Uneven Value

Repairing The Federal Role in Postsecondary Education

Preston Cooper
Senior Fellow, American Enterprise Institute

February 5, 2025

The American Enterprise Institute (AEI) is a nonpartisan, nonprofit, 501(c)(3) educational organization and does not take institutional positions on any issues. The views expressed in this testimony are those of the author.

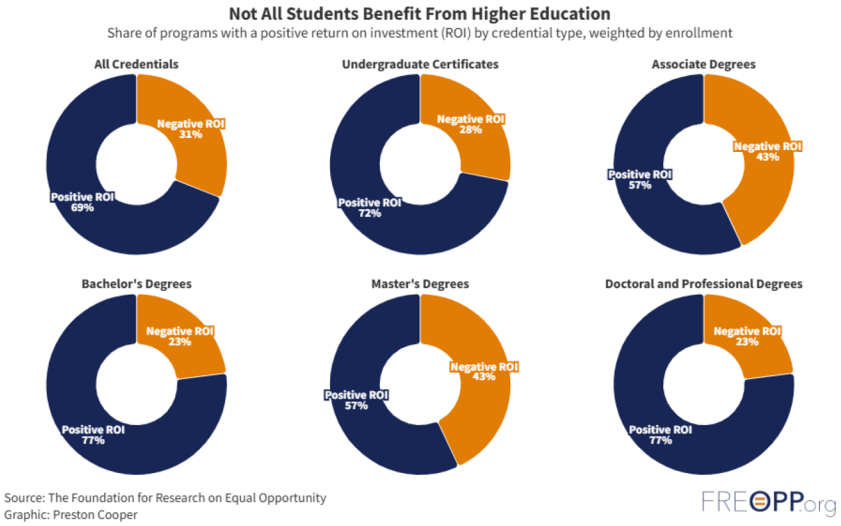
Good morning, Chairman Walberg, Ranking Member Scott, and distinguished members of the Committee. Thank you for the opportunity to testify today on the state of postsecondary education and the federal government's role in shaping it. My name is Preston Cooper, and I am a senior fellow focusing on the economics of higher education at the American Enterprise Institute (AEI), a nonprofit, nonpartisan public policy research organization based here in Washington, DC. My comments today are my own and do not reflect the views of AEI, which does not take institutional positions.

The higher education system suffers from many problems, including excessive costs, low completion rates, uneven financial value for students, and high rates of student loan nonpayment. Federal government policies unintentionally exacerbate many of these issues, as taxpayers' considerable investment in higher education comes with few quality controls or accountability to ensure that colleges and universities are delivering on their promises to students. Fortunately, this year's budget reconciliation process presents a unique opportunity to remedy many of the policy problems that have led the higher education system astray.

The Problems Facing Higher Education

Americans are losing confidence in the higher education system. According to *The Wall Street Journal*'s polling, 56 percent of Americans believe that a four-year college education is no longer worth the cost.[1] People are less likely to say that colleges and universities have a positive impact on the direction of the country.[2] This changing sentiment has translated into falling enrollment: The number of students attending college has dropped 12 percent since its peak in 2010.[3]

Some of the public's lack of confidence is justified. Higher education can be financially beneficial for students—but there are major exceptions. A large proportion of students who pursue higher education end up no better financially than if they had not attended college at all. My analysis of the financial value of college for the Foundation for Research on Equal Opportunity finds that 31 percent of federally funded higher education programs leave the typical student worse off financially. For some credential types, including master's degrees, the share of nonperforming programs is closer to one-half.[4]



There are numerous reasons why some forms of higher education may not deliver a return on investment (ROI) for students. Students benefit from college when the financial returns (the expected increase in lifetime earnings from a college degree) justify the costs and risks (including tuition, fees, time spent out of the labor force, and the chance of noncompletion). But if earnings after enrollment are middling, costs are too high, or

completion rates are too low, the decision to pursue postsecondary education becomes less of an investment and more of a gamble.

Unfortunately, all three of these conditions are often present in federally funded higher education programs. Many fields of study at the postsecondary level do not typically lead to middle- or high-wage jobs, meaning students often do not earn back the costs of their education.[5] The cost of tuition has also risen over the last several decades; when college is more expensive, it's less likely that a particular degree will pay off, all else being equal.[6] In addition, most of the value of a college degree is contingent on actually finishing the degree. Nationwide, however, only 62 percent of college students finish their credentials within six years, and some colleges have completion rates below 10 percent.[7]

Yet the federal government continues to fund programs that typically do not pay off for students. Between 2018 and 2022, I estimate that at least $37 billion in Pell Grants and $86 billion in federal student loans flowed to higher education programs with a negative return on investment.[8] This lavish funding of low-ROI programs contributes to the student loan crisis: When students pay too much for college relative to what they earn after leaving school, it becomes harder to pay down loan balances. Before the March 2020 pause on student loan payments, 11 million borrowers were either in default or more than 30 days delinquent on their debts.[9] Millions more were taking advantage of income-driven repayment, loan forbearance, and other options to reduce or eliminate their monthly payments.[10] Because of these programs, the Congressional Budget Office expects that taxpayers will lose $223 billion on student loans originated between 2025 and 2034—to say nothing of expected losses on outstanding loans.[11]

Former President Joe Biden's largely unsuccessful efforts to forgive federal student loans en masse did little to help matters. But at the same time, the federal student loan program's problems predate the Biden administration. Setting the student loan program on a sustainable trajectory requires more than simply undoing the Biden administration's executive actions. To repair the damage to higher education, Congress could undertake a more comprehensive overhaul of the student loan system to rein in fiscal costs, impose sensible limits on borrowing, and hold colleges accountable for their economic outcomes.

Reforming Student Loan Repayment

The student loan repayment system has been broken for years now. Over 25 percent of student borrowers in some cohorts defaulted on their loans.[12] In response, the Obama administration greatly expanded income-driven repayment (IDR) plans, which allowed borrowers to reduce their monthly payments. These plans proved popular: By the beginning of 2020, over half of direct loan balances were being repaid on an IDR plan.[13] While IDR plans allowed some borrowers to avoid the worst consequences of student loan default, such as wage garnishment and negative credit reports,[14] they did not fix the fundamental problem: Too many students used federal loans for postsecondary education where cost exceeded value.

The Obama-era IDR plans allowed borrowers to slash their payments—sometimes to zero—and receive forgiveness of remaining balances after a set period of time (most commonly 20 years). In 2018, 36 percent of borrowers qualified for a $0 monthly payment.[15] Since interest continued to accrue, borrowers whose payments did not fully cover interest saw their balances rise; during the 2010s, more than 75 percent of IDR users

negatively amortized during their first six years on the repayment plan.[16] In 2020, the Congressional Budget Office projected that the federal government would forgive more than $200 billion over a decade on loans being repaid through IDR plans[17]—an estimate issued before the Biden administration announced changes to IDR that made the program even more costly.

In 2023, President Biden's Education Department announced changes to IDR that would cut monthly payments even further and accelerate loan cancellation for some borrowers. The new version of IDR, known as the Saving on a Valuable Education (SAVE) plan, could cost as much as $475 billion, according to the Penn Wharton Budget Model.[18] (The SAVE plan is currently on hold pending the outcome of legal challenges.) As of February 2024, 57 percent of borrowers enrolled in the SAVE plan qualified for a $0 monthly payment.[19] The vast majority of SAVE users are not expected to fully repay what they borrowed. In the words of economist Adam Looney, the SAVE plan "turn[s] student loans into untargeted grants."[20] In addition to fiscal costs, this dynamic threatens to create a moral hazard: If students do not need to repay what they borrowed in full, it becomes easier for colleges to hike tuition and capture the additional loan dollars. While the SAVE plan exacerbated this problem, it was already present to some extent in the Obama-era IDR plans.

A responsible approach to student loan repayment would strike a balance between fiscal responsibility and preserving an appropriate safety net for lower-income borrowers. The College Cost Reduction Act (CCRA), introduced last year by Representative Virginia Foxx, offers one such approach.[21] CCRA would create an income-driven repayment plan that would reverse SAVE's ultralow payments and eliminate loan cancellation. In exchange, the

CCRA plan would cap total interest accrual and offer low-income borrowers assistance in making their loan payments—ensuring that on-time payments always pay down principal, rather than being consumed by accrued interest. This would prevent the ballooning loan balances that so many borrowers complain about. The changes to loan repayment under CCRA would save $127 billion over ten years.[22]

Loan Origination and Price Transparency

The burdens to students and costs to taxpayers of the loan program are not just a product of the repayment system, but of loan origination policies. While loans to undergraduate students are capped, federal lending to parents of undergraduates and graduate students is effectively unlimited. (These groups may borrow up to the cost of attendance, as defined by the institution.) This enables colleges to charge higher tuition than they otherwise might, since students and parents will always be able to borrow more from taxpayers to cover it.[23]

Federal loans to parents of undergraduates, known as Parent PLUS loans, are a particular burden on low-income families. Parent PLUS loans carry a 9.08 percent interest rate and a 4.228 percent origination fee, and they are largely ineligible for the most generous IDR plans.[24] A fifth of Parent PLUS borrowers have an expected family contribution of zero, meaning the government has determined the parents have too low an income to contribute anything toward their children's education.[25] Yet wealthy institutions such as Baylor University have relied extensively on Parent PLUS loans, often pushing tens of thousands of dollars' worth of the loans on lower-income parents who subsequently cannot pay down their balances.[26] A small group of universities benefit the most from

Parent PLUS loans: Just 10 percent of colleges took in more than 80 percent of Parent PLUS loan volume in the 2023–24 academic year.[27]

Loans to graduate students—which the Congressional Budget Office expects to make up around half of new student loans originated this fiscal year[28]—are also effectively unlimited. Not coincidentally, inflation-adjusted average debt for graduate students rose from $58,920 in 2000 to $90,060 in 2020.[29] Graduate loans are major source of the student loan program's fiscal costs; taxpayers will lose $102 billion on lending to graduate students over the coming decade.[30] Moreover, Grad PLUS funds in particular flow overwhelmingly to wealthy universities. The richest one-fifth of schools use more than two-thirds of Grad PLUS loan volume. New York University and the University of Southern California each take in more Grad PLUS dollars than every Historically Black College and University in the nation, combined.[31]

Adding complications to this is the fact that colleges are not always upfront with students regarding the net prices students are expected to pay, or the volume of loans in their financial aid packages. A Government Accountability Office (GAO) investigation found that 91 percent of colleges do not list an accurate net price on financial aid offer letters; many financial aid offers do not even clearly label loans as "loans." One offer letter GAO highlighted pushed nearly $25,000 in federal student loans on the recipient and his or her parents, despite never using the word "loan."[32] These opaque pricing practices often lead students to misunderstand how much debt they are taking on, and they make it more difficult for students to negotiate with institutions for a better deal.

Fixing these issues will require a two-pronged approach. First, commonsense caps on federal loans are in order. The College Cost Reduction Act includes aggregate caps of

$50,000 to undergraduate students, $100,000 to graduate students, and $150,000 to students in professional programs like medicine. The bill also includes program-specific annual loan limits based on the median cost of attendance for similar programs nationwide, which would constrain debt burdens for students in the most expensive programs.[33] The Congressional Budget Office expects these limits will save $19 billion over ten years.[34] Second, students need greater transparency around what they pay for college. CCRA requires institutions to use standardized financial aid award letters that clearly label loans as "loans," and to guarantee tuition prices for students for a set period of time. The bill also mandates the collection of more detailed data on net prices.[35]

Holding Colleges Accountable for Outcomes

Changes to student loan limits and loan repayment will improve the loan program. But the underlying problem is a lack of ROI for too many higher education programs. Fixing that problem will require changing the incentives facing colleges and universities, which means stronger accountability around student outcomes for institutions that participate in the student loan program. While there are some outcomes-based accountability policies in the loan program, such as the Cohort Default Rate, these have largely lost their utility as institutions have figured out how to manipulate the metrics involved.[36] A more comprehensive approach is needed, involving strong incentives for colleges.

Ideally, the federal government would insist on student loan "risk sharing"—that is, when students can't repay their loans in full, their institutions ought to bear some of the costs. This creates an incentive for institutions to ensure that student debt burdens do not become unmanageable, given students' expected earnings after leaving school. Institutions

can reduce their risk-sharing liabilities by limiting the amount of debt they foist on students, adopting policies to ensure more students graduate and realize the benefits of higher education, and overhauling their program offerings to enroll more students in programs with a higher financial value. The goal of risk sharing is not to punish colleges financially, but to provide encouragement for schools to make these needed changes.

Student loan risk sharing will save taxpayers money as the government collects risk-sharing penalties and originates fewer bad loans in the first place. These funds can then be deployed in other ways to sharpen the incentives for colleges to improve ROI. The College Cost Reduction Act adopts such a two-pronged approach: It includes a risk-sharing system and allocates a portion of the savings to a new direct aid program known as the PROMISE Grant. PROMISE Grants would be awarded directly to institutions; the amount is determined through a formula based on the number of low-income students the institution enrolls and how well it serves them. Institutions qualify for larger PROMISE Grants if they maintain high graduation rates, produce high earnings for former students, and keep prices to a reasonable level. The PROMISE Grant serves as both an incentive and a source of funding for institutions to invest in expanding high-quality programs.[37]

Institutions which reduce their reliance on student loans, enroll healthy numbers of low-income students, and maintain strong student outcomes are likely to come out ahead financially even in the presence of student loan risk sharing. My analysis of CCRA finds that more than 80 percent of community colleges would see a net increase in funding under the Act, and community colleges with a strong vocational focus would especially benefit.[38] This would not only reward these schools for their good outcomes but also encourage them to

invest in expanding the high-quality vocational programs that have seen considerable increases in student demand in the last few years.[39]

These reforms would deliver savings for taxpayers as well. The Congressional Budget Office estimates that CCRA's risk sharing and PROMISE Grant policies combined would save the federal government $18 billion over the coming decade.[40]

Conclusion

Postsecondary education in America suffers from high costs, uneven financial value, and a chaotic student loan system that exacerbates more problems than it solves. Fortunately, this year Congress has a unique opportunity to address many of postsecondary education's most pressing challenges by reforming student loan repayment, imposing commonsense limits on federal loans, and holding taxpayer-funded colleges accountable for their outcomes. These reforms would represent a strong first step toward restoring public confidence in American higher education.

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Chairman WALBERG. Thank you, Mr. Cooper. Now I recognize Mrs. Nelson for your 3 minutes.

STATEMENT OF MRS. JANAI NELSON, PRESIDENT AND DIRECTOR-COUNSEL, NAACP LEGAL DEFENSE FUND, WASHINGTON, D.C.

Mrs. NELSON. Good morning. Good morning, Chairman Walberg and Ranking Member Scott, and distinguished Committee members. Thank you for the opportunity to testify. I am Janai Nelson, President and Director Counsel of the Legal Defense Fund.

Since our founding 85 years ago by Thurgood Marshall, we have fought to ensure that black students, and indeed all students, have equal access to education. Seventy years ago, the Supreme Court's unanimous decision in *Brown* vs. *Board of Education* ended legal, racial segregation in public schools.

Writing for the majority, Chief Justice Warren said that equal public education is the very foundation of good citizenship. Public education is critical to the health of our economy, and it is essential to the viability of our multi-racial democracy.

Sadly, Brown's mandate to provide all students with quality learning experiences that respect their full humanity, intelligence, and dignity regardless of their race, ethnicity, or gender identity, or ability is under fierce attack.

Under the guise of promoting so-called school choice, or parental rights, has emerged a reincarnated massive resistance to high-quality, equitable and inclusive public education that performs for all.

This massive resistance 2.0 seeks to achieve what George Wallace and his extremist acolytes could not, the hoarding of public resources to fund private education for a privileged few at the expense of the many.

Our school system disproportionately fails low-income, black, brown, indigenous, disabled, and new English learners in alarming ways. They face vastly unequal educational resources, leading to significant disparities in academic outcomes.

We can all agree that our K through 12 system must do better, yet instead of working to fix these persistent actual threats to the future of our country, a well-funded cabal of activist organizations is lobbying for a separatist private school system funded by public tax dollars.

As the organization that vanquished State sponsored racial segregation in 1954, LDF stands firmly against a publicly financed, separatist, private schools system in 2025. Over the past 30 years, racial segregation has steadily worsened in public schools. This shift correlates with two major changes, the decrease in Court mandated desegregation oversight, and the proliferation of voucher programs that defund public schools.

Privatizing public education and shirking Federal responsibility would be disastrous for the 50 million students and their families who rely on public schools and the equal access that they are legally mandated to provide.

President Trump's orders to restrict teaching and learning in inclusive and supportive environments, and his threats to dismantle the Department of Education, and upend critical enforcement of

Federal civil rights laws will demolish the very foundation of good citizenship.

We must reject these proposals out of the Project 2025 playbook and approach public education with common sense and common purpose, not separatism and self-dealing. This Congress owes it to the millions of families who are scared of what these radical policies will mean for their children to choose a better path.

Indeed, if we are being serious about educating all of America's children equally, we must implement a proactive vision that centers evidence-based interventions, like universal pre-K, competitive teacher salaries, rigorous standards, whole child supports, as well as gun safety legislation to eliminate both barriers to equal education and to truly protect our children.

Our country is at an inflection point and so is American education. We can build a system in which all students can thrive or allow our schools to remain spaces of division and inequality, with an escape route for some to line the pockets of private actors with public dollars.

I hope this Congress will invest in the promise of every child in America by strengthening our public education system that serves us all. Thank you, and I look forward to your questions.

[The Statement of Mrs. Nelson follows:]

Written Testimony of Janai Nelson, President and Director-Counsel of the Legal Defense Fund Before the U.S. House of Representatives Committee on Education and the Workforce on "The State of Education in America"

I. Education as a Civil Right

Good morning. My name is Janai Nelson. I serve as the President and Director-Counsel of the NAACP Legal Defense and Educational Fund, Inc. ("LDF" or the "Legal Defense Fund"). Thank you for the opportunity to testify about civil rights and the state of public education in America. Founded by our nation's first Black U.S. Supreme Court Justice Thurgood Marshall, LDF is America's premier legal organization fighting for racial justice. This year we commemorate 85 years of using the power of law, narrative, research, and people to defend and advance the full dignity and citizenship of Black people in America.

Since the historic U.S. Supreme Court decision in *Brown v. Board of Education*, which LDF litigated and won, we have continued to fight for the rights of Black students to receive high quality, equitable educational opportunities. Chief Justice Earl Warren wrote on behalf of a unanimous Court, stating that an equal public education was "perhaps the most important function of state and local governments" and "the very foundation of good citizenship."[1] Good citizenship requires a quality educational experience that respects the intelligence, dignity, and humanity of *all* students. In *Brown*, Chief Justice Warren further described education as "a principal instrument in awakening the child to cultural values, in preparing him for later professional training, and in helping him to adjust normally to his environment […] Such an opportunity, where the state has undertaken to provide it, is a right which must be made available to all on equal terms."[2] Our constitutional principle of equal protection under the law mandates that school districts, postsecondary institutions, states and the federal government provide equal educational opportunities for all students, including Black students and other students of color, LGBTQIA+ students, students with disabilities, immigrant students and other historically underserved populations.

America has faced challenges in providing equitable educational opportunities since its founding when certain children were excluded on the basis of income, race or ethnicity, gender, or geographic location.[3] Prior to the establishment of a public school system, education was mostly made available to white males with access to private funding. However, the nation's Founding Fathers recognized that the success of American democracy would rest upon an educated population and electorate. During the 18th century, the founders set out to establish a unified system of publicly funded schools or free schools. And in the 1830's, the "common school" movement began to push for state-funded public education for all children. Even then, education was recognized as integral to intellectual and social-emotional development, and critical to the nation's economic success. Therefore, since its inception, public education is not only critical to creating pathways for all to meaningfully participate in our economy but is essential to defending our multiracial democracy.

In many ways, *Brown*'s promise is one that parallels the promise of America; it calls on each of us to dismantle systemic barriers, eliminate the vestiges of decades of legal discrimination and ensure every individual's right to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. As the guardians of *Brown's* legacy, LDF vehemently opposes the false rhetoric that this decision supports a colorblind society whereby race cannot be considered for the purpose of advancing racial equity. Indeed, *Brown* sought to end a racial caste system premised on the white supremacist tenet that some people are superior to or more deserving of respect, dignity, and opportunity than others. More than 70 years later, while *Brown* has transformed America in profound ways, this country still has much work ahead to fulfill its promise.

II. Affirmative Vision – Fulfilling Brown's Promise

LDF envisions and has spent over eight decades fighting for a future in which all people, regardless of race or other constructs and characteristics, have access to high-quality, integrated educational opportunities from pre-school to higher education. In addition to representing Black students in the fight to desegregate schools, particularly in the Deep South, LDF also advocates for equal educational opportunities for all students. From the U.S. Secretary of Education to paraprofessionals in classrooms, those entrusted with the responsibility to educate students must equitably distribute opportunities and resources, including college-and-career ready preparation, ensure access to diverse and high-quality educators, and foster safe and healthy school climates that improve academic outcomes for America's nearly 50 million students enrolled in public elementary and secondary schools and 19 million students enrolled in colleges and universities.[4]

Fair and equitable schools require an unrelenting commitment to eliminate all forms of discrimination – whether intentional or in effect. Furthermore, education should be rigorous, accurate and inclusive. To achieve these goals, we must reject laws and policies that seek to exclude historically marginalized communities' history, perspectives, and experiences from classroom instruction and materials, and school initiatives, raise educational standards, and fully and equitably resource our public school system. Sadly, Black students and other historically underserved students continue to face resistance and systemic barriers to *Brown's* vision, and too often attend schools that lack the proper funding and staffing to meet students' unique needs or subject students to segregated and negative school climates which threaten their mental health, sense of belonging and ability to thrive.

Proposals to abolish or reassign, and therefore destabilize, the role of the U.S. Department of Education (ED) will result in less protection from discrimination, decreased financial support and fewer overall resources for millions of students. Furthermore, advocates for a public education system with absolute reliance on state control fail to account for the critical role of the federal government in providing meaningful guidance and technical assistance, strategically disburse federal grant funding, collecting, analyzing, and reporting data, issuing

rulemaking, and engaging in robust enforcement of federal law. Without the disincentive of decreased federal funding, there will be no guarantee that states will adequately comply with federal education and civil rights laws such as the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, Higher Education Act, Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972, Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, and Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990. ED's work as an agency is critical to ensuring all students, especially Black students, have equal access to educational opportunities.

Integrated, Inclusive Schools

Where a student lives should not be determinant of the educational opportunities afforded to them. Yet, most public school student assignments are based on residential boundaries, demonstrating how deeply entrenched housing segregation perpetuates the systemic denial of educational opportunities to Black students.[5] In the 1930's, the federal government endorsed existing patterns of housing discrimination against people and communities of color through a practice that became known as redlining. The Federal Homeowners' Loan Corporation (HOLC), established in 1933, used color-coded maps to represent the perceived risk of lending in particular neighborhoods, with "hazardous"' (the highest risk) areas coded in red. HOLC routinely gave Black communities a "hazardous" rating, discouraging lending in those "redlined" areas. The impacts of redlining went far beyond just housing; it also played a role in school equity funding and school segregation. A 2021 study from Harvard University found that schools and districts located today in historically redlined D neighborhoods have less district per-pupil total revenues, larger shares of Black and non-white student bodies, and less diverse student populations relative to those located in A, B, and C neighborhoods.[6] Persistent racial isolation in neighborhoods and schools correlate directly with increases in concentrated poverty, which impacts students' access to an equitable education.

Since *Brown,* several states and districts have abandoned, or worse, reversed efforts to further school desegregation, resulting in *de facto* resegregated public schools. According to the Government Accountability Office (GAO), the nation's kindergarten to 12th grade ("K-12") student population remains divided along racial, ethnic and economic lines, despite boasting a more diverse student population overall. In fact, more than a third of students (about 18.5 million) attended schools where seventy-five percent or more students were of a single race or ethnicity during the 2020-21 school year.[7] Recently, researchers examining data from U.S. public schools dating back to 1967 found that segregation between Black and white students has *increased* by sixty-four percent since 1988 in the 100 largest districts, and segregation by economic status has increased by about fifty percent since 1991.[8] The resegregation of public schools is one of the most salient examples of the generational impact of institutional racism, and how educational and economic opportunities are inextricably intertwined.

Efforts to root out and dismantle the structural inequality inherent in racially and economically segregated schools are crucial to providing equal educational opportunities for all students. Segregated schools often cite significant disparities in academic outcomes, including lower achievement in math, science, language, and reading; less access to experienced teachers; less supportive school climates; and fewer resources.[9] Moreover, one study found that districts with the highest percentages of students of color received about thirteen percent less per student in funding than districts with the lowest percentages.[10] And in 2018, high-poverty school districts on average received seven percent less state and local funding, or about $1,000 less per student, than low-poverty school districts.[11] Thus, school desegregation is an important strategy to more equitably distribute resources, close achievement gaps, and provide equal opportunities by ensuring that resources are not horded by race.

Programs that help increase diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility can help improve outcomes for all students. They also can help equalize opportunities for students who are unfairly disadvantaged. These programs can include pathway programs that expose students to science, technology, engineering and math careers, direct admissions programs for selective magnet schools and higher education institutions, and broad outreach and recruitment measures to expand the college applicant pool. Moreover, numerous studies have found that students who learn in an inclusive educational community are more apt to develop a positive identity and succeed academically.[12] Ultimately, diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility programs benefit all students, as diverse learning environments help build critical thinking, problem-solving ability, and intellectual self-confidence[13] and prepare students to thrive in our increasingly global economy.[14]

Access to High-Quality Educators and Instruction

Racially and socio-economically segregated schools are, too often, underfunded, understaffed and under-resourced, limiting postsecondary opportunities and denying access to the American dream based on race and class. Across the country, Black students are more likely to attend schools that have high percentages of novice teachers, first year teachers, and uncertified teachers.[15] Black students are less likely to have access to Advanced Placement and International Baccalaureate coursework as well as dual enrollment or dual credit programs.[16] In addition to longstanding disparities in access to experienced, high-quality educators, and rigorous instruction, America continues to face nationwide teacher shortages and a teacher diversity crisis. In the fall of 2021, approximately half of the 49.4 million students enrolled in public elementary and secondary schools were students of color.[17] Unfortunately, the teachers in U.S. public schools are far less racially diverse than their students.[18] White students have an overrepresentation of same-race teachers compared to the student body, while Black, Latino, and Asian American students have an underrepresentation of same-race teachers.[19] As highlighted in our 2024 report entitled, *Black Educators as Essential Workers,* schools with racially diverse

student populations and a diverse educator workforce demonstrate stronger academic outcomes for *all* students.[20]

Students of all races, including white students, can benefit significantly from racially diverse educational settings through improved social-emotional learning during their formative years and enhanced cognitive and interpersonal skills during adolescence and beyond.[21] Research that randomly assigned upper-elementary students to a Black or white teacher found significant improvements in a range of academic outcomes, such as better math and language test scores and lower chronic absenteeism, for both Black and non-Black students with Black teachers.[22] Despite the demonstrated benefits of Black educators and racially diverse classrooms, there has been an historic and ongoing effort to push Black educators out of schools. According to most recent estimates from the National Center for Education Statistics, just seven percent of public school teachers are Black – far less diverse than the student population, which is approximately fifteen percent Black.[23]

Black teachers face the same challenges that all teachers face, such as low pay, burnout, lack of administrative support, and the painstaking work to address the impact of COVID-19 on student learning. They also face additional challenges like racially hostile school environments in integrated schools.[24] For instance, as discussed further below, the ongoing spate of anti-truth attacks often target Black educators in uniquely harmful ways by limiting their ability to talk about their own lived experiences in the classroom and making them feel like their own identity is a liability that places their jobs at risk.[25] The stark lack of diversity in the educator workforce and insufficient training perpetuates educational disparities and is harmful to school climate, such as contributing to racial inequalities in school discipline.

Safe, Healthy School Climates

Racial disparities in exclusionary school discipline have plagued America's public school system for decades. Black students are routinely subjected to overly punitive school discipline practices that lead to school pushout, exacerbate the school-to-prison pipeline and hinder academic achievement.[26] The 2020-2021 Civil Rights Data Collection (CRDC) showed that Black students were almost twice as likely to be suspended or expelled compared to their white peers.[27] There is no evidence which suggests that students of color misbehave more than their white peers, yet they are persistently over-represented in school suspensions, expulsions, corporal punishment and other forms of school discipline. In 2019, the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights noted that "[s]tudents of color as a whole, as well as by individual racial group, do not commit more disciplinable offenses than their white peers – but [B]lack students, Latino students, and Native American students in the aggregate receive substantially more school discipline than their white peers and receive harsher and longer punishments than their white peers receive for like offenses.[28] Research has also shown that school discipline policies with

subjective offenses, such as disobedience and disruptive behavior, are significant contributors to the disproportionate exclusionary disciplining of students of color.[29]

Alarmingly, racial disparities in exclusionary school discipline begin as early as preschool[30] and are more evident when examining suspension and expulsion rates at the intersection of race, gender and disability status.[31] For example, GAO recently reported that Black girls face more frequent and harsher school discipline than other girls based on multiple forms of bias, including adultification, colorism, and gender stereotypes.[32] During the 2017-2018 school year, Black girls comprised fifteen percent of girls enrolled in public schools that year but received almost half of the exclusionary discipline – forty-five percent of out-of-school suspensions; thirty-seven percent of in-school suspensions; and forty-three percent of expulsions.[33]

These harms are exacerbated by the prevalence of school-based law enforcement. Research shows that police do not create safety in schools and instead may foster hostility – and sometimes violence.[34] Black students are overrepresented in school-based arrests and referrals to law enforcement. The 2020-2021 CRDC revealed that while "[B]lack students represented fifteen percent of the total student enrollment, they accounted for eighteen percent of law enforcement referrals and twenty-two percent of those subjected to school-related arrests despite the fact that Black students do not generally have higher rates of misbehavior than other students.[35] Black students are also more likely to attend schools staffed with law enforcement but without a counselor, social worker, nurse, or school psychologist.[36] Overall students require a safe and nurturing environment for learning, and police in schools is not only incompatible with this goal, but also diverts limited federal funds away from evidence-based practices to improve school climate, and therefore student achievement.

Ongoing COVID-19 Recovery

In order to fulfill *Brown*'s promise, government, school leaders and advocates must work together to address longstanding failures of America's public education system exacerbated by the pandemic through targeted federal funding and data-driven policy reforms. In 2021, the Department of Education reported the widespread impact of COVID-19's disruptions to learning for students of color, students with disabilities, LGBTQIA+ students, English learners, and low-income students in K-12 and postsecondary schools.[37] While there is some variation between states, recent federal data on student performance in reading and math demonstrates overall historic lows for student achievement, underscoring that a proactive vision for education equity must center evidenced-based immediate interventions and long-term strategies to eliminate barriers to equal educational opportunities.

While not exhaustive, we recommend the following Congressional action to advance education equity and safeguard equal and fair treatment for all students.

1. School Desegregation: Congress should expand grant programs that advance school desegregation and equitable school funding, and support federal policies that incentivize state and local educational agencies to implement evidence-based strategies that increase diversity among all races and ethnicities and socioeconomic backgrounds in schools.

2. Educator Quality and Diversity: Congress should incentivize school districts to institute reforms to attract Black applicants and members of other underrepresented communities to careers in teaching, including through increased salary, housing subsidies, student loan repayment, and anti-discrimination policies for all teachers.

3. School Climate: Congress should build upon state and municipal level progress by banning discriminatory school grooming and dress policies. Congress should also support policies which seek to advance evidence-based strategies to eliminate disturbing and unconstitutional disparities in school discipline practices like increasing student access to school counselors and psychologists and decreasing exposure to law enforcement in educational settings.

4. Culturally Inclusive Education and Critical Learning [address discriminatory book bans, need to prepare students to function in a multiracial democracy as a component of good citizenship, including critical analytical skills].

III. Threats to Civil Rights and Education Equity and Economic Justice

Unfortunately, rather than setting forth a policy agenda that protects students' constitutional rights and provides equal educational opportunities, the current administration has prioritized legislation and executive action that may further deny access to a quality education for all students.

Dismantling the Department of Education

One of the greatest threats to education is Project 2025's proposal to restructure and abolish the Department of Education, sabotaging the federal government's ability to protect the civil rights of all students, ranging from early childhood education to higher education. ED's role is crucial to advance policies and practices that eliminate racial disparities and strengthen state and local compliance with federal civil rights laws, including Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972, Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, and Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990. For decades, "states' rights" has been weaponized to shield bad actors from accountability for maintaining segregated, inequitable public schools. Abolishing ED will place Black students, and other students for whom the federal government is often the last line of defense, at greater risk of being denied the

opportunity to receive a high-quality education in diverse classrooms with a positive school climate and rigorous academic instruction.

Through its work to enforce federal anti-discrimination law, ED's Office for Civil Rights (OCR) utilizes a variety of policy enforcement tools to eliminate discriminatory barriers for nearly 80 million individuals that attend federally funded schools. During Fiscal Year 2024 alone, OCR received nearly 23,000 complaints overall— a new record high.[38] Of those complaints, 37% (8,457) alleged disability discrimination and 19% (4,307) contained allegations of discrimination on the basis of race, color, or national origin. One example includes a complaint filed against the Southwick-Tolland Granville School District in Massachusetts where Black students were repeatedly called a racial epithet and were subjected to a racially hostile school environment where white students held a "slave auction" where they could bid on the school's Black students.[39] Similarly, LDF has represented impacted students and families against Carroll Independent School District in Texas alleging violations of Title VI (Complaint No. 06-21-1301) and of Title IX (Complaint No. 06-21-1302) based on egregious race and sex discrimination. One student was regularly called "nigger" and other slurs, including "porch monkey" and "Black fuck." Another student was called "dumb cunt," was subject to unwelcome and degrading sexual remarks, and physically attacked in the hallway. The local school district was aware of and failed to appropriately address and, in some instances, condoned the harassment. As a result, both students struggled in school and suffered from mental health harms.

While OCR has reported an increase in reporting of harassment on the basis of race, sexuality, and gender identity,[40] school districts in states like Texas have rolled back anti-discrimination policies, removing protected classes and examples from those policies.[41] Any federal action to dismantle or defund OCR and eliminate enforcement tools will significantly hinder the ability of the federal government to provide remedies to students who have been impacted by various forms of systemic oppression, harassment, and discrimination.

Furthermore, Project 2025 directs ED and the Department of Justice (DOJ) to issue joint guidance asserting that each agency would no longer investigate Title VI cases based on disparate impact, and that the DOJ should enforce civil rights laws only in the courts, eliminating important administrative tools to address discrimination.[42] The Supreme Court has repeatedly affirmed that Title VI regulations extend beyond intentional discrimination to seemingly neutral policies or practices that have a discriminatory effect on historically disadvantaged communities.[43] To weaken or terminate the ability of ED to investigate and resolve Title VI complaints based on disparate impact will significantly harm Black students and will exacerbate existing inequities for other students of color, including Latino, Asian American and Native American students. OCR should not only remain within ED but Congress should allocate additional funding to increase its capacity to resolve the historical number of complaints received by their office.

School Privatization – Tax Credit Scholarships/Vouchers/Charter schools

Congress must reject attempts to privatize public education via programs like "school choice," tax credit funded scholarships, voucher programs, and education savings accounts. Each generation of American families and leaders are called upon to renew *Brown*'s foremost promise: equal access to a sound public education for all. The Court's recognition that public education is "perhaps the most important function of state and local governments" and "the very foundation of good citizenship"[44] is especially prescient today as its foundations are assaulted by President Trump and those implementing his Project 2025 agenda.[45] The denial, and even the erosion, of public education through means of separate but inherently unequal facilities equates to the state's endorsement of one group's superiority over another group and is violative of the Constitution.[46] Congress must act boldly by reinvesting in public education and transforming it into education system promised by *Brown*.

Due mostly to "massive resistance" and court-sanctioned funding disparities, many public schooling systems today have and continue to fail to provide an equal and sound education to this nation's children, particularly its Black children. Despite *Brown*'s clear mandate to end racial segregation in public schooling, states across the country, particularly in the South, waged campaigns of "massive resistance" in an effort to evade desegregation. Segregationists in Virginia alone attempted to nullify *Brown*,[47] closed an entire school district for five years,[48] prohibited integrated schools from receiving state funding,[49] and promoted "Freedom of Choice" plans, "school choice," or tuition (voucher) programs.[50] Where "massive resistance" failed, many white families chose to flee to segregated neighborhoods rather than to build integrated communities.

In *San Antonio v. Rodriguez*, the Court permitted states to maintain inferior public school systems where the inequality was a result of the differences in taxes collected per district. Over fifty years later, *Rodriguez* has led to the Orwellian result where public education is chronically underfunded and every state in this nation, without exception, spends more on incarceration per person than on education per student.[51] Indeed, in America, the majority of state funding for K-12 education and incarceration comes from the same discretionary fund.[52] And from 1977 to 2021, elementary and secondary education spending grew 136% while corrections spending grew 346%, meaning government spending on incarceration increased 2.5 times the increase in K-12 education spending.[53]

Today's efforts to provide learning environments outside of traditional public schools and privatize education must be examined with the history of public education post-*Brown* and attempts to defy integration. Like their "Freedom of Choice" plan predecessors, "school choice," private school voucher programs, and tax credit scholarship proposals endorsed by President Trump are just veiled attempts to maintain and expand the vestiges of racial segregation. "School choice" is a false choice for the vast majority of American families, particularly Black and other

families of color and low-income families. Voters in Colorado and Nebraska recently saw these programs for the false choice that they are and rejected them – Congress must do the same and champion public education instead.[54]

Congress need not look far to examine the impact of the privatization and divestment of public education will have racial and economic segregation. In the South, where these disparities are most pronounced, racial and economic segregation occurs between private schools and public schools but also within and between public school districts.[55] And even with the assistance of vouchers, private schools remain unaffordable for most Americans, meaning only wealthier families can begin to even consider them a viable option.[56] Therefore, voucher programs effectively aid primarily wealthier families to parachute out of public schools and into private ones.

Additionally, private and religious schools are not required to enroll all applicants and have a history of rejecting students of color, students with disabilities, and LGBTQIA+ families. Nor do many private or religious schools provide sufficient accommodation for students with disabilities and many require the waiver of disability rights protections to be enrolled.[57] Moreover, voucher programs have higher rates of expulsion and dropouts, leading to lowered educational quality for Black and other students of color.[58] Therefore, unlike in a public school setting, Black families must navigate a minefield of discrimination for voucher programs without civil rights protections.

And while there are good examples of non-traditional public schools, like charter schools that welcome all students regardless of race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, gender identity, immigration status, disability, religion, or any other identifying characteristic and offer high-quality academic excellence and inclusive and culturally relevant curriculum, too many fall short too often, failing students and families. "Financial malfeasance, mismanagement, low enrollment, and poor academic performance are the top four reasons charter schools fail and close regularly."[59] Charter schools in New Orleans' should serve as a cautionary tale as data shows that stark racial disparities in academic performance and access continue to persist.[60] For example, in some charter schools, application data for the 2022-23 academic year showed that Black students were two to three times more ineligible than white students.[61] One report found New Orleans' charter and voucher based school choice programs "more likely to lead to small increases in segregation [rather] than to improve integration."[62] Additionally, schools continue to close mid-academic year forcing parents to find alternatives and disrupting student learning.[63]

Indeed, the privatization of education leads to the divestment of public education, limiting their capacity to serve all students, while increasing financial revenues for private actors. Voucher programs and tax credit scholarships lack the kind of public accountability and transparency that is typically required of funding for public schools, obscuring whether taxpayer dollars are effectively spent and whether students are succeeding.[64] Voucher students "perform no better—and in many cases worse—than their peers" in private schools with few structures of

public accountability.[65] Additionally, tax credits are generally not considered federal financial assistance and thus, do not trigger the application of federal civil rights laws, such as Title VI. Privatizing public education in the form of tax credit scholarships removes any educational accountability and limits civil rights enforcement at schools that may engage in discrimination. Divestment from public education and into private education will only make the lack of transparency and accountability worse.

Changes to Title I Funding

Opponents of progress have argued for changing Title I of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act ("Title I") federal funding formulas, which supports "low-income students and nearly two in three public schools" and addresses critical "opportunity gaps" between these students and more affluent peers.[66] Freezes or restrictions in Title I funding will disparately impact low-income students who are disproportionately Black. During the 2018-2019 academic year, Black schoolchildren were more likely than any other racial group to attend a Title I public school, with approximately seventy percent of Black public-school students in Title I districts and schools.[67] Additionally, research shows that state funding formulas substantially underfund school districts serving Black, Latino, and Native American students, by "as much as $2,700 per student."[68] Federal oversight and civil rights enforcement through the Department of Education has been a key lever for investigating and remedying such educational disparities.

Title I is also a critical tool for supporting student achievement during national emergencies. Title I status is used to screen eligibility for school-based programs targeted at low-income students and families, like vision, dental, and nutritional healthcare.[69] Students who receive vision care services through Title I schools score higher than their peers on standardized tests.[70] And during the COVID-19 pandemic, Congress targeted relief funds to Title I schools and Title I schools benefitted most from the emergency funds.[71] Congress should ensure that Title I funds continue to help increase access to a high-quality education for all students.

Higher Education: Federal Student Aid

People who are able to attain a college degree typically make over $40,000 in earnings more than those who hold a high school degree.[72] Yet, due to the rising costs of college tuition, many students, particularly the majority of Black students, receive federal assistance via grants and loans to attend college.[73] Seventy-two percent of Black students received a Pell Grant[74] and student loan debt disproportionately impacts Black students[75] Black students take on more student loans across all income groups. Further, Black women hold the most student loan debt of any demographic.[76] As a result, the impacts of indebtedness including anxiety, depression, insomnia.[77] Moreover, even though Black students hold more debt on average than white students, Black students are less likely to earn comparable yearly salaries. Privatizing student

loans, phasing out income-based repayment plans[78]and loan forgiveness programs will intensify the education and wealth gap for Black students and workers. Congress must reject proposals to remove protections like Borrow's Defense,[79]student loan forgiveness[80] and income-driven loan repayment for student loan borrowers and student loan relief programs.

Potential Discriminatory Impact of Recent Executive Actions

Since the first day of President Trump's second and final term, his administration has sought to stretch the bounds of presidential authority by issuing executive orders[81] and other directives designed to create chaos; hurt communities of color and other under-resourced groups; and chill lawful conduct designed to increase access to educational and other opportunities. Like other opponents of progress, the administration seeks to reframe equal opportunity as discrimination and to weaponize the U.S. Supreme Court's decision in *Students for Fair Admissions v. Harvard* and *Students for Fair Admissions v. University of North Carolina,* 600 U.S. 181 (2023) *(SFFA)* to reverse and foreclose critical gains toward equality. However, President Trump cannot erase the experience of our communities by removing a website, and he cannot change civil rights laws with the stroke of a pen. Despite his edicts, policies that increase diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility; that respect the dignity of transgender, intersex, and non-binary people; and that allow students to learn about people from all backgrounds in a school environment that encourages belonging and respect remain lawful under the U.S. Constitution. By attacking diversity, equity, and inclusion, President Trump is attempting to make our country further divided and segregated, make access to opportunity more limited and less fair, and increase unearned advantages for the top one percent. In order for all students and our nation to succeed, we must reverse course.

Attacks by opponents of progress on programs that increase diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility have already harmed Black students. Echoing President Trump's rescinded 2020 executive order banning the federal government and federal grantees from promoting so-called "divisive concepts,"[82] more than twenty states have passed legislation prohibiting schools from teaching about race and gender inequalities and historical events or operating diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility offices and programs. As a result of these laws, certain teachings and discussions have been censored by school administrators, students have faced discriminatory restrictions on funding student programs, and student organizations have lost access to inclusive spaces that had welcomed Black and LGBTQIA+ students for years. For example, in 2023, Texas passed a sweeping law closing down diversity, equity, and inclusion offices on college campuses with harm falling most on Black students and other students of color.[83] Since that law came into effect, universities have also started censoring professors and coursework.[84] In the past several weeks, bills have been filed by Texas lawmakers that would expand the prohibition against diversity, equity, and inclusion initiatives to K-12 schools, historically utilized businesses, state government agencies, and state contractors. These laws infringe upon the constitutional rights of students and teachers, create hostile campus

environments, and ultimately prevent schools from achieving their educational goals. LDF successfully blocked the implementation of similar legislation in Florida,[85] and recently filed suit to halt similar statutes in Alabama[86] and South Carolina.[87]

If fully implemented, President Trump's executive orders attacking diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility and inclusive curricula could further undermine America's ability to put all students on the path to success. President Trump's executive orders direct the federal government to terminate diversity, equity, and inclusion offices, positions, and programs in the federal government; end "equity-related" grants and contracts; and chill publicly traded corporations, large nonprofits, philanthropic foundations, and institutions of higher education from advancing equity by threatening legal action and other measures to challenge their programs.[88] The Trump administration has also sought to erase inclusive curricula, instructional materials and programs that center the history and perspectives of Black and LGBTQIA+ people through vague and discriminatory restrictions under the guise of ensuring "parental oversight" and "sex-based rights." This anti-truth sentiment is likely to chill the speech of educators and students in the classroom[89] , decrease academic rigor, and may violate laws prohibiting the federal government from interfering with local control of school curricula.[90]

President Trump's executive orders have already caused chaos and harm. In response to these executive orders, the Department of Education has already removed over two hundred pages of resources and guidance that helped schools create welcoming environments and comply with civil rights law.[91] Moreover, in order to effectuate President Trump's executive orders, including his directive to terminate "equity-related" grants and contracts, the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) issued a memorandum on January 27, 2025, freezing over 2,600 federal grants.[92] This memorandum threw every corner of this country into chaos and demonstrated the danger that any further freezes might impose on equal access to education and other opportunities. While the OMB memorandum has since been rescinded, the administration has made it clear that it still intends to halt "equity-related" grants and contracts,[93] potentially causing significant and irreversible harm to the nation's public education system.

While President Trump characterizes diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility as illegal, immoral, and unpatriotic, these are fundamental American values. Equal opportunity and antidiscrimination obligations are enshrined in the U.S. Constitution and our federal civil rights laws, including Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, which governs schools and other institutions that receive federal funding. Many diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility programs can help schools comply with these anti-discrimination laws by helping them identify and break down unfair barriers that impede student success, block equal employment opportunities, and create negative campus climates. The Supreme Court's decision in *SFFA* did not alter the legality of initiatives that advance diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility[94] and President Trump cannot change that by executive order. Nor can President Trump infringe

upon Congress' power by refusing to implement programs duly authorized and funded by legislation. We urge Congress to use its powers to make plain the harmful impact and challenge the unlawful implementation of these executive orders.

Deregulation: Block Granting

Congress must guard against the wholesale use of block grant funding to states and localities, which removes definitions of who the funding is intended to serve, making it difficult for Congress to hold recipients of funding accountable. [95] This ambiguity about the purpose of federal funding then makes it easier for the funding to be removed altogether. For example, when definitions of who should be served by federal funding are removed, those funds can be used for students who would otherwise not qualify for assistance and the most marginalized students do not receive the appropriate amount of federal assistance. Block granting of Title I and other federal programs so that funds can be diverted from marginalized children to their wealthier peers — meaning less support for children in concentrated poverty and exacerbated disparities based on family income, race, disability, and first language. Therefore, block grants may leave the most vulnerable students, who are often concentrated in schools that are already in most need of additional funding, in even greater need.

IV. Conclusion

Public schools in America must deliver quality education for all regardless of race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, gender identity, immigration status, disability, religion, or any other identifying characteristic. Decades of resistance to *Brown's* mandate of desegregation, coupled with poor education policy, have resulted in critically underfunded school systems and under-achieving schools. Congress must fulfill the promise of *Brown* by supporting a public education system that welcomes, includes, and is safe for all and provides equitable high quality academic instruction. Likewise, Congress must guard against attacks on public education like the privatization of public education, the rolling back of civil rights protections in the classroom, and the erosion of the Education Department's funding and responsibilities. Education is a civil right and a public good for all. Congress must not abandon the project and promise of equal access to free, quality public education in the U.S. by siphoning funding to private entities and furthering harmful racial disparities among future generations of American students.

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[86] Press Release, Legal Def. Fund, *Professors, Students, and Civil Rights Group Seek Preliminary Injunction in Lawsuit Challenging Alabama's Discriminatory Censorship Law, SB 129* (Jan. 29, 2025), https://www.naacpldf.org/press-release/professors-students-and-civil-rights-group-seek-preliminary-injunction-in-lawsuit-challenging-alabamas-discriminatory-censorship-law-sb-129/.
[87] Press Release, Legal Def. Fund, *South Carolina Educators, Students and Renowned Author Challenge State's Racially Discriminatory Censorship Law* (Jan. 27, 2025), https://www.naacpldf.org/press-release/south-carolina-educators-students-and-renowned-author-challenge-states-racially-discriminatory-censorship-law/.
[88] Executive Order 14151, Ending Radical and Wasteful Government DEI Programs and Preferencing (Jan. 20, 2025), https://www.federalregister.gov/documents/2025/01/29/2025-01953/ending-radical-and-wasteful-government-dei-programs-and-preferencing; Executive Order Ending Illegal Discrimination and Restoring Merit-Based Opportunity, Jan. 21, 2025, https://www.whitehouse.gov/presidential-actions/2025/01/ending-illegal-discrimination-and-restoring-merit-based-opportunity/.
[89] Executive Order Ending Radical Indoctrination in K-12 Schooling White House, (Jan. 29, 2025), https://www.whitehouse.gov/presidential-actions/2025/01/ending-radical-indoctrination-in-k-12-schooling/.
[90] 20 U.S.C. 1232a.
[91] Press Release, *U.S. Department of Education Takes Action to Eliminate DEI* (Jan. 23, 2025), https://www.ed.gov/about/news/press-release/us-department-of-education-takes-action-eliminate-dei.
[92] Off. Mgmt. & Budget, Memorandum for Heads of Executive Departsments. and Agencies, Jan. 27, 2025, https://www.documentcloud.org/documents/25506191-omb-memo-1-27/.
[93] Zolan Kanno-Youngs, et al., *The Freeze is Rescinded but a Review to Eliminate Spending on "Woke" Ideologies Will Proceed,*NY Times (Jan. 29, 2025), https://www.nytimes.com/live/2025/01/29/us/trump-federal-freeze-funding-news#federal-freeze-grants.
[94] Legal Def. Fund, Equal Prot. Initiative, *The Economic Imperative to Ensure Equal Opportunity: Guidance Ffor Employers, Businesses, and Funders* (2024), https://www.naacpldf.org/wp-content/uploads/2024-02-01-Aff-Axn-Economic-Guidance-2.Pdf.
[95] Ctr. on Budget & Pol'y Priorities, *The Problems with Block-Granting Entitlement Programs*, https://www.cbpp.org/the-problems-with-block-granting-entitlement-programs (last accessed Feb. 1, 2025).

Chairman WALBERG. Thank you, Mrs. Nelson. I now recognize you, Mr. Taylor.

STATEMENT OF MR. JOHNNY C. TAYLOR, JR., PRESIDENT AND CEO, SOCIETY FOR HUMAN RESOURCE MANAGEMENT, ALEXANDRIA, VIRGINIA

Mr. TAYLOR. Chairman Walberg, Ranking Member Scott and distinguished members of the Committee, thank you. Thank you for giving us and me the opportunity today. At SHRM, we represent 340,000 H.R. professionals worldwide. We see firsthand the challenges of today's workforce.

I just came back from Charlotte, North Carolina, where I presented to the management team, the top 250 executives of Bank of America, and I can tell you they agree with everything that I am about to say. The education to employment pipeline is leaky, it is broken, and it is busted.

Now that said, our system is still the best in the world. We are proud Americans. Imagine what we could be if we unleashed the power of all of the talent. First, higher education is leaking. We have invested billions, yet degrees do not always align with market needs, as Dr. Cooper just mentioned.

Employers are shifting to skills-based hiring, valuing experience and certifications over diplomas and degrees. Initiatives like Michigan State's Align Center, for example, and North Carolina's My Future NC Initiatives, prove that we can better connect education to employment.

Second, K through 12 education is really broken. We have undervalued vocational training, leaving students unprepared. Nearly two-thirds of our students lack reading proficiency. Programs like Aspire, which is the Aspire Trade High School in North Carolina, and John Bounds High School's agriscience program show hands on learning works.

I have a 14-year-old daughter right now in Virginia Public Schools. I know what is happening in our public schools, and I know that many of you have devoted your lives, including some becoming teachers of the year because we are committed to making this work.

Finally, our untapped talent pools remain overlooked. Millions of skilled veterans, older workers, those who are formerly incarcerated individuals with disabilities, they have and are ready to contribute. We need them in the workforce, as the Chairman mentioned. We have 7, almost 8 million, open jobs in America. We do not have the luxury to exclude anyone from the workforce.

If you are ready, willing, and able, we want you there. We commend Chairman Walberg, Ranking Member Scott, Chairwoman Foxx and others for their leadership in updating the WIOA system. We believe that we need to get this done in Congress. We are heartened by the bipartisan interest in continuing the efforts of this Congress, and encourage the following key provisionss to be retained.

Direct at least the 50 percent of funds for training, leverage employer expertise, and create new staffing options. Members of the Committee, the solution is clear, we need a national strategy that

aligns education with workforce demand, and SHRM stands ready to partner with you.

This just is not about jobs; it is about people's lives and their livelihoods. Thank you, and I look forward to your questions.

[The Statement of Mr. Taylor, Jr. Follows:]

Written Testimony of Johnny C. Taylor, Jr.
President & CEO
SHRM

Submitted to the
House Committee on Education and Workforce

The State of American Education

Wednesday, February 5, 2025

Chairman Walberg, Ranking Member Scott, and Committee Members, thank you for the opportunity to testify on the state of American education and the workforce.

SHRM empowers people and workplaces by advancing HR practices and maximizing human potential. For over 75 years, we have been the trusted authority on all things work. SHRM is the foremost expert, researcher, advocate, and thought leader on issues and innovations impacting today's evolving workplaces. With nearly 340,000 members in 180 countries, SHRM touches the lives of more than 362 million workers and their families globally.

Our members are not just at the front line, they ARE the front line of America's workforce. This allows us to provide unparalleled insight into the current and future state of the workplace.

Members of the Committee, the education-to-employment pipeline is leaky, broken, and busted. This pipeline is a vital component of our efforts to mitigate the challenges of our current workplaces, to improve the lives and livelihoods of workers and their families, and to close the skills gap.

Imagine the pipelines in our homes—essential for delivering water and gas—developing leaks and gaping holes. The workforce pipeline in the United States faces similar structural issues:

- Higher education is leaky,
- K-12 is broken, and
- The line to Untapped Talent Pools is busted.

Higher Education Pipeline is Leaking:

The U.S. has made significant investments in higher education, but there is a misalignment between academic programs and workforce demands. Many students enter college expecting it to be the best pathway to a career but graduate with degrees that fail to match labor market needs. At the same time, many jobs today do not require a college degree. Employers are beginning to focus on skills-based hiring, recognizing that practical experience and certifications often provide a better measure of job readiness and success than a traditional four-year degree. The rise of artificial intelligence (AI) and automation will further reshape the workforce, making it essential for higher education institutions to realign their curricula to meet emerging job requirements.

But we can learn from Michigan State University's – Align Center Project. This initiative focuses on aligning educational programs with local workforce requirements to support community growth and employment opportunities. The project's goals are to create a unified resource center that addresses the gap in workforce training and local career development, especially for non-traditional clients overlooked by existing resources.

North Carolina has a state educational attainment goal to ensure the state has a sufficient educated population to fully meet workforce demands by 2030 and beyond. The General Assembly requires myFutureNC to report annually on how the state is tracking toward the state's goal to have 2 million 25-44-year-old North Carolinians having an industry-valued credential or college degree by 2030. The most recent data will be reported at the myFutureNC annual event hosting members of the General Assembly in Raleigh on February 20th and via simultaneous livestream to the public and other interested parties statewide and elsewhere in the United States.

A recent SHRM survey found that nearly a quarter of organizations have eliminated college degree requirements for certain positions, embracing skills-based hiring as a solution to labor shortages. Additionally, data from the Bureau of Labor Statistics show that nearly 22% of all jobs in 2023 did not require any formal educational credential, emphasizing the need for alternative pathways to employment. That said, higher education and employment preparation are not mutually exclusive goals.

Visionary higher education leaders continue to innovate to serve students, society, and the economy. They are recognizing the value of internships, joint degree programs, and "recapturing" adult students who have no degree, but adequate credits. We see institutions of higher education driving competitiveness through university-industry partnerships, integrating industry certifications with degrees, and aligning technology with talent development.

K-12 Pipeline is Broken:

Over the past few decades, K-12 education has shifted away from vocational training, co-op programs and trade education, leaving students without practical skills that prepare them for immediate employment.

In recent years, work-based learning has received increased focus from federal, state, and local governments. However, the crisis remains acute and much of the responsibility has shifted to community colleges, creating a gap in early workforce training. Many high school graduates enter the workforce unprepared, without technical skills or the necessary power skills to succeed. Power skills—problem solving, critical thinking, innovation and creativity; the ability to deal with complexity and ambiguity; and communication—are critical for workplace success, yet they are often overlooked in K-12 education.

Further, according to the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), around two-thirds of fourth and eighth graders are not proficient in reading – 66%[1] and 69%[2] respectively – which severely limits their future job prospects. The most recent National Center for Education Statistics survey found that 28% of U.S. adults rank at the lowest levels of literacy, highlighting a downward trend in reading proficiency and its long-term workforce implications.[3]

It should come as no surprise that many students who are unable to read grow into adults unable to read. The most recent National Center for Education Statistics survey found that 28% of U.S. adults rank at the lowest levels of literacy, representing a continued downward trend and which has a clear negative impact on our nation's workforce.

But we can turn to Aspire Trade High School in North Carolina, which is an industry-specific trade school for grades 9-12, developed by Aspire Carolinas Foundation Inc. It is the only charter model in North Carolina that integrates hands-on labs with academic instruction. Students complete a four-year program where they earn both a high school diploma and a trade certificate. Trade instruction begins in the freshman year, and seniors can participate in apprenticeships with local companies. The program offers career and technical education in HVAC, plumbing, data science, carpentry, culinary arts, masonry/ceramic tile, welding/fabrication, medical assisting, medical coding, and automotive technology. Core academic coursework includes credits in math, English, social studies, science, and physical education. Students receive instruction from industry experts, and where applicable, the curriculum leads to North Carolina trade certification or licensure.

At John Bowne High School, the Animal, Plant, and Agriscience Institute is a historic agricultural education program that dates back to 1917. It provides students with hands-on learning through a four-acre land laboratory featuring a poultry house, large animal barn, greenhouse, orchard, and crop fields. Freshman and sophomore students explore both Plant and

[1] National Center for Education Statistics. (n.d.-a). *Reading: Achievement results – Grade 4*. The Nation's Report Card. https://www.nationsreportcard.gov/reading/nation/achievement/?grade=4
[2] National Center for Education Statistics. (n.d.-b). *Reading: Achievement results – Grade 8*. The Nation's Report Card. https://www.nationsreportcard.gov/reading/nation/achievement/?grade=8
[3] National Center for Education Statistics. (2024, December 10). *U.S. adults score on par with international average in literacy skills, below international average in numeracy and problem-solving skills in Survey of Adult Skills*. U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences. https://nces.ed.gov/whatsnew/press_releases/12_10_2024.asp

Animal Sciences before specializing in their junior and senior years. The program includes a three-part summer experience, where students work on the school's farm, intern on upstate farms through the Farm Cadet Program, or gain urban agricultural experience in veterinary hospitals, florists, and zoos. Many graduates pursue higher education and careers in agriculture, with the program maintaining college articulation agreements with institutions like SUNY Cobleskill, Rutgers, and Delaware Valley University.

And the Line to the Untapped Talent Pool is Busted:

The SHRM Foundation, SHRM's 501 (c) 3 philanthropic arm, defines Untapped Talent as military veterans, spouses, and caregivers; individuals ages 60 and older; people with disabilities; those with a criminal record; and opportunity youth (young adults who are not in school or working). While these workers bring unique skills and potential to the workforce, outdated policies and a lack of tailored strategies hinder their participation. Harnessing the potential of these talent pools requires a targeted approach that addresses these barriers and recognizes the value these workers can contribute. These segments of the workforce remain underutilized despite their potential contributions. Below are a few highlights:

Older Workers: We are at a unique time in history when five generations simultaneously participate in the workforce. Sustaining business growth will require contributions from each of them. To get there, organizations must understand how a multigenerational workforce can best integrate into their workplace. Members of each generation or age cohort tend to have in common certain values and perceptions of work that arise from shared experiences of their formative years. Each group brings expectations regarding authority and hierarchy, work ethic, work behaviors and life issues; at times causing conflict or stress in multigenerational workplaces. SHRM and SHRM Foundation recognize older workers (aged 60 and above) as a valuable yet often overlooked talent pool. They emphasize that these mature employees bring extensive experience, honed skills, and reliability to the workforce. SHRM advocates for hiring practices that tap into this demographic to enhance organizational competitiveness and address labor shortages. By integrating older workers, companies can benefit from their mentorship capabilities and unique perspectives, leading to more robust and productive teams.

Our call to action to Congress: Supporting older workers means more than supporting laws on the books opposing age discrimination. There are also creative ideas to keep workers in the workforce longer. Some are within the jurisdiction of this Committee; some are outside its jurisdiction. Some relate to Social Security's Retirement Earnings Test (RET) and trying to creatively see if we can incentivize some retirees to return to work by giving them freedom to earn more – while not prompting people to retire so early that they face a benefit reduction. Similarly, the labor and tax committees can work with the staff of the Joint Committee on Taxation to examine how the rules of the road for Phased Retirement can be clarified to see more widespread adoption of plans that give more options than "active or retired". Phased retirement gives people the benefits of income and socialization along with opportunities for more leisure,

time with family, rest and wellness, and community service. Critically, these plans hold potential to hang on to talent longer.

Opportunity Youth: Opportunity youth – young adults 16 to 24 who are not in school or working – represent nearly 4.7 million young people, or 12% of that cohort's population.[4] Unfortunately, many young adults have fallen through the cracks of the K-12 system, and without intervention, they remain disconnected from employment and education. By overlooking this talent pool, however, organizations are missing out on talent. SHRM Research shows that of those who have currently or previously worked with this talent pool, 77% of HR professionals report that opportunity youth perform as well as or better than other employees.[5] Our call to action to Congress: We encourage you to maintain the momentum you built last Congress on the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) reauthorization. In a challenging legislative environment, this committee marched through the storm to get a major bipartisan workforce package to the brink of passage. WIOA can help opportunity youth attain technical education and drive down a pathway toward a career.

Veterans: HR professionals agree (to any extent) that veterans can thrive in both team-based and individual settings (98%), can thrive in both entry-level and managerial roles (96%), and are uniquely trained to work through chaotic times (95%).[6] Veterans bring leadership, discipline, and specialized skills to the workforce, yet their resumes often do not translate easily to civilian job postings, leading to challenges in getting this group into skills-appropriate employment. Nearly a quarter (23%) of HR professionals said aligning veterans' military skills to civilian job requirements is a significant hiring challenge for their organization.[7] Despite the availability of military skills translation tools, only 2% of organizations use them, although nearly half of users (46%) report such tools have helped them successfully hire veterans they would have previously deemed unqualified.[8]

Our call to action to Congress: When it comes to veterans' employment, please encourage the federal government to recognize skills-based hiring as a model to mirror. Our veterans have been trained and they have the skills. Help them transfer their skills to employment. When skills-based hiring is practiced by state and federal government, it signals to the private sector that this is a viable and acceptable talent-acquisition tool. In addition, support legislation and efforts to allow the skills of military veterans to translate to other employment.

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[4] From Social Good to Strategic Talent Advantage: The Business Case for Hiring Opportunity Youth, SHRM, SHRM Foundation, & Walmart, 2024).
[5] Id.
[6] Completing the Mission: Best Practices for Recruiting and Hiring Veterans, SHRM, SHRM Foundation, & USAA, 2024. (Appendix A)
[7] Id.
[8] Id.

Workers with Disabilities: Overall labor force participation among people with a disability has risen sharply since the start of the pandemic[9], whereas participation among people without a disability continues to be slightly below its pre-pandemic level. However, the unemployment rate among this audience (12.6%) is still substantially higher than among people without a disability (7.9%).

Our call to action to Congress: The federal government can certainly help with disability employment. The private sector needs to be with you too. SHRM along with Voya Financial and the National Down Syndrome Society (NDSS) is a co-founder of an organization called the CEO Commission for Disability Employment (the "CEO Commission"). The CEO Commission is designed to increase opportunities for people with disabilities to obtain and maintain employment. We aim to accomplish this by building a coalition of private-sector organizations, including businesses of different sizes, including both for-profit and non-profit entities. Through effective collaboration and research, the CEO Commission promotes best practices across the entire business community to decrease barriers individuals with disabilities face in accessing employment. Where does Congress come in? To the extent you can, remove work disincentives – let people work. In many, many cases they want to do just that. In a means-testing world, that's a policy conundrum.

At SHRM, we are proud to support individuals with disabilities, exemplified by one of our dedicated employees who is paraplegic and a vital member of our Customer Experience Team. Despite his disability, he has found meaningful employment at SHRM, a role he acknowledges would be challenging to secure elsewhere. Our commitment to consider untapped talent pools has enabled him perform his job with assistive technology, ensuring he can contribute effectively. This dedication to supporting untapped pools of talent, including individuals with disabilities, underscores SHRM's mission to foster employment opportunities.

Rural and Deserted Communities: SHRM would argue that there is another important untapped talent pool to look into as Rural America is experiencing a brain drain, as young professionals move to metropolitan areas for education and employment, leaving their hometowns with shrinking workforces and declining local economies. This trend also mirrors some urban areas where major employers have closed, such as in Detroit, leading to high unemployment rates and reduced economic opportunities. The Bureau of Labor Statistics reports that there are over 8 million unfilled jobs, yet 6.9 million unemployed people—indicating a skills mismatch that must be addressed[10].

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[9] Federal Reserve Bank of St. Louis. (n.d.). *Unemployment rate – Black or African American women, 20 years and over* [Data set]. FRED, Federal Reserve Bank of St. Louis. Retrieved January 31, 2025, from https://fred.stlouisfed.org/series/LNU01374597

[10] U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. (2025, January 10). *The employment situation—December 2024* (USDL-25-0003). U.S. Department of Labor. https://www.bls.gov/news.release/empsit.nr0.htm

Our call to action to Congress: Hard-hit communities have job seekers. The connection still needs to be made between job seekers and employers. Training may be needed. How can the Congress help? Again, I call upon you to support skill-building programs and continue to complete the work you did on WIOA. Distressed, rural, and deserted communities can be reactivated and reinvigorated with support from government and the private sector.

SHRM's Solutions to Secure the Pipeline:

To address these challenges and stabilize the pipeline to bring qualified workers into the workforce, SHRM believes this must be a collaborative effort between government (federal, state, and local), employers, education institutions, and workers. Organizations like GlobalMindED are working to connect students with internships, apprenticeships, experiences, and job opportunities, equipping them with the personal and professional knowledge needed to fulfill their ambitions. Everyone must do their part and SHRM as the trusted authority on all things work is ready to partner with all stakeholders, including you, the policymakers.

SHRM's 119th Congress legislative agenda is aimed at providing solutions to close the workforce participation gap; shape the future of work; and modernize pivotal workplace policies.[11]

Closing the Workforce Participation Gap: SHRM is working to address the gap between the supply of available skilled workers and the demand in open positions. Addressing this is undoubtedly a daunting issue with multifaceted causes; however, this gap will only widen without properly addressing its root causes. The disparities in labor participation, demographic shifts, and the increasing skills misalignment highlight the urgent need for policies that incorporate both long-term and immediate solutions.

Our national rate of population growth has been on a downward trajectory for the past six decades. Spanning the past 100 years, the U.S. Census statistics confirm that the U.S. population growth rate peaked in 1960 (18.5%) and has increased more slowly in every decade since. Threatening our capacity to mobilize the requisite talent to propel business development and economic growth, the U.S. population only grew by 7.4% between 2010 and 2020, which was the second slowest rate of growth in our nation's history. The slowest rate of growth occurred during the Great Depression when the nation's population increased by 7.3%.

Looking ahead the Census Bureau projects that the U.S. population will continue to grow at a slower rate between now and 2058. Notably, the U.S. fertility rate has been below the replacement level required to maintain a stable population since 2008.

To address these demographic challenges, partnerships and open communication among employers, educational institutions, and government agencies are essential to addressing the busted untapped talent pipeline. SHRM research highlights key resources that can support organizations in hiring and retaining this talent. Employers should establish formal programs

[11] SHRM 119TH Legislative Agenda (Appendix C).

accessing these workers and adopt a skills-based hiring approach when they can. Collaboration with educational institutions and community organizations is vital to expand access to career pathways. Additionally, the government must provide guidance, invest in public resources to support employment, and enact policies that connect these groups to skill-building opportunities. For example, for veterans, HR professionals have highlighted their key resources to improve veteran hiring and retention, including tools to translate military skills to job roles (36%) and connections to local veteran support organizations (32%). Employers also seek guidance on job descriptions (30%), best practices for post-hire engagement (32%), and updates on laws affecting veteran hiring (26%).[12]

For organizations that prioritize the recruitment and retention of Untapped Talent, SHRM research has noted a high return on investment where talent is optimized.[13] For example, employees with disabilities perform well. SHRM research found that nearly all HR professionals (97%) and people managers (92%) say that employees with disabilities regularly perform the same or better than their peers without disabilities.[14]

SHRM believes that to address the workforce participation gap, we must prioritize workforce development priorities that wisely invest in our workplaces by upskilling and reskilling – both present and future. SHRM research has found that employers still face significant challenges in finding qualified talent, including candidates lacking the necessary work experience, technical skills, and power skills.[15]

Learning never stops – even when people leave the classroom. SHRM research has found that U.S. workers and HR professionals both identify learning and development as a key HR priority for 2025.[16] It ranked third for both groups, with 25% of HR professionals and 24% of U.S. workers selecting it as a top three priority.[17]

Ensuring workers have access to the right skills through pathways that best suit them will require innovative thinking from all stakeholders. For example, while traditional internships are seen as a common way for individuals to gain skills as they complete their studies, SHRM research noted the use of micro-internships, which are short-term, paid, professional projects for college students and recent graduates that allow them to build their resume without taking on a full-time internship. SHRM research found that organizations rate the effectiveness of internships and micro-internships similarly in terms of their ability to help address talent shortages, with longer-term internships being rated as slightly more effective.[18]

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[12] Completing the Mission: Best Practices for Recruiting and Hiring Veterans. SHRM. 2024.
[13] Beneath the Surface: A Unified Approach to Realizing the Value of Untapped Talent, SHRM Foundation & Walmart, 2021
[14]SHRM Foundation. (n.d.). Employing abilities at work. SHRM Foundation. https://employingabilities.org/
[15] SHRM Talent Trends, 2024.
[16] SHRM 2024-2025 State of the Workplace, SHRM, 2024 [Forthcoming].
[17] Id.
[18] SHRM, Talent Trends, 2024.

As I discussed earlier, SHRM appreciated the opportunity to work with this Committee during the last Congress in helping to shape legislation to reauthorize and modernize WIOA. We look forward to continuing to work with you in this Congress to ensure this legislation is enacted into law. Among the provisions we are particularly supportive of are those that support skills-based hiring; ensuring more funds go directly to support training; leveraging the efforts of employers to carry out training such as through critical industry skills fund and sector partnerships; and creating new skilling opportunities to dislocated workers through expanded individual training accounts. We strongly urge swift passage of this legislation.

SHRM supports bipartisan efforts like the Bipartisan Workforce Pell Act that expand access to Pell Grants for high-quality, short-term training programs which enable low-income students to more quickly gain the skills needed to enter the workforce and secure good-paying jobs. We are encouraged by the continued bipartisan commitment of this Committee to pursue this legislation and are hopeful for swift passage this year.

Although we recognize this Committee does not have jurisdiction over tax policies, we encourage you to work with the Ways and Means Committee on tax policies which could have a significant impact on the ability of employers to help build the skills of their workforce. Specifically, we support the expansion of Coverdell and 529 plans to cover older students and a broader array of education and workforce development opportunities. We also support the extension and expansion of Sec. 127 tax-free educational assistance benefits.

Public policy must prioritize economic, work, and education opportunities and include untapped talent pools. The American education system has a huge role to play in these efforts. This includes traditional paths to obtaining skills such as two and four-year universities—as well as pre-apprenticeship, apprenticeship, and skilled credentialing programs.

Strong labor participation is essential for economic sustainability and growth, as businesses depend on a diverse mix of skills, expertise, and perspectives to thrive in today's competitive landscape. SHRM is dedicated to collaborating with all interested stakeholders, engaging individuals and organizations across the political spectrum, and fostering partnerships at every level of government. By working with businesses, educators, and policymakers, SHRM seeks to enhance workforce participation and bolster a resilient workforce.

Shaping the Future of Work: The future of work is a projection of how work, workers and the workplace will evolve in the years ahead. Governments, employers, educators and workers need to prepare now for the future which will include understanding and addressing the impact of Artificial Intelligence (AI) and AI displacement on workers. Forthcoming SHRM research uses data from the BLS Occupational Employment and Wage Statistics and O*NET to estimate the level of automation displacement risk faced by the current pool of U.S. employment in the near term.[19] A key finding was that SHRM estimates that about 12.6% of current U.S. employment

[19] NOTE: Important to note that this study is about automation displacement risk, as opposed to AI displacement risk or exposure. The two concepts are related, of course, because AI technologies are often a vehicle for automation. However, when talking about this study, the language used should focus on automation and its relationship to transforming/displacing work. Follow-on work later in 2025 will talk about AI more directly.

(19.2 million jobs) is at high to very high risk of displacement via automation in the near term, including 2.1% (3.2 million jobs) of employment facing very high risk. This risk varies tremendously across industries and occupational groups.[20]

This is a substantial concern for workers. SHRM research found that over 1 in 3, U.S. workers fear AI could make their jobs obsolete - 37% of U.S. workers said that AI has the potential to make their current job obsolete, while 27% said AI is making their current job obsolete.[21] At SHRM, we believe that the workforce can rise to this challenge. To meet this mark, America needs increasingly skilled workers to meet the needs of employers in the future. According to SHRM's "2024 AI in the Workplace" research, 83% of HR leaders identify upskilling as critical in today's AI-driven economy, and 76% of U.S. workers emphasize the necessity of acquiring new skills.

While AI will necessitate new skills, it can also be used as a tool to develop AI skills, as some use it to support learning and development activities. However, few organizations are leveraging AI to upskill, reskill, or identify skills gaps in their workforce. Among the **1 in 4 (26%)** organizations that use AI to support HR-related activities, **43%** use AI to support learning and development and **51%** say it makes their learning and development programs more effective.[22]

For organizations, the transformative impact of AI in the workplace underscores the importance of adopting responsible policies that mitigate potential job displacement while fostering innovation. For educators, this means integrating AI and emerging technologies into curricula at all levels, ensuring students and workers are prepared for the evolving demands of the job market. For federal policymakers, it requires supporting initiatives that promote AI adoption in key areas such as recruitment, learning and development, and performance management—helping organizations navigate the complexities of the modern workplace. This calls for clear guidelines for preventing unlawful bias and promoting responsible AI use, along with federal initiatives to educate stakeholders on both the benefits and risks of AI in the workplace.

To prepare workers for the future of work, there must be a strong connection between the business and education communities. That is the basis of SHRM's E-Squared: Strengthening the Education-to-Employment Pipeline initiative. While it is impossible to predict with exact certainty where technology will lead the future of work, there is sufficient data now on what skills organizations are looking for, and an idea of how technology and trends will shape the future of work. This means being responsive to these changes. Greater investment in vocational and technical education at the K-12 level can help close the workforce skills gap. Additionally, SHRM strongly advocates for HR professionals to have designated seats on local workforce boards and ensuring that employer perspectives shape workforce training. I go even further and advocate for HR professionals serving on university and community college boards as HR professionals bring a

[20] Jobs at Risk – US Employment in the New Age of Automation [Forthcoming Q1 2025], SHRM
[21] January 2025 Current Events Pulse, 2025.
[22] 2024 Talent Trends: AI in HR, SHRM, 2024.

wealth of knowledge in workforce alignment, talent pipeline development and strategic workforce planning, which are all essential to ensure graduates are job-ready.

One way to strengthen the education-to-employment pipeline is by increasing the limit on Section 127 of the Internal Revenue Code, which currently allows employers to provide up to $5,250 in tax-free educational assistance, including student loan repayment, to employees. SHRM research found that an increase to the $5,250 limit would be more likely to encourage organizations that currently offer education assistance benefits to expand their offerings.[23]

Modernizing Pivotal Workplace Policies: Finally, as part of SHRM's "rebuilding the pipeline," we will continue to advocate for the modernization of pivotal workplace policies. To close the workforce participation gap, workplace laws and regulations must allow organizations to shape strategies that advance the recruitment and retention of top talent.

I would be remiss in not mentioning the caregiving challenge for workplaces. According to SHRM research, at least 80% of working caregivers anticipate the care they provide to be long-term. Looking forward, within the next 5 years, 21% of current working caregivers anticipate taking on new or additional childcare responsibilities, 14% anticipate taking on new or additional adult care responsibilities, and 18% anticipate taking on new or additional eldercare responsibilities. Employers are recognizing that it's good policy to support workers with caregiving responsibilities. Workers cannot build products and produce services unless they have met often multigenerational caregiving responsibilities. Unfortunately, this also means that they cannot be upskilled if they do not have the time to expand their skill-set. Government and industry must be mindful of these challenges as we draw up our laws and policies.

Conclusion:

Fixing the education-to-employment pipeline requires a coordinated effort between policymakers, educators, employers, and HR professionals. We must champion the policies that strengthen these as a solution to future workforce challenges. SHRM stands ready to lead this charge, advocating for solutions that prepare all Americans for meaningful employment. Workforce development is not just about filling jobs, it is about ensuring economic prosperity, national competitiveness, and the well-being of workers and their families. Simply put, it is about lives and livelihoods.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify, and I look forward to your questions.

[23] SHRM, Talent Trends, 2024.

Chairman WALBERG. Thank you, Mr. Taylor, and thanks to each of the witnesses. Under Committee Rule 9, we will now question the witnesses under the 5-minute rule. I ask members to keep our questions succinct, so the witnesses have time to answer. I now recognize myself for 5 minutes of questioning.

Ms. Neily, in your testimony you mentioned the problem of foreign influence in both higher education and K–12. Although the last administration failed to take this threat seriously, the Committee introduced multiple pieces of legislation last Congress to help address this serious problem.

Can you talk more about what steps Congress should take to protect our students and the national security?

Ms. NEILY. Big picture we have three things we need to do. We need transparency, we need notification, and we need consequences. Last session's Trace Act and the Deterrent Act addressed these by providing access to curriculum, so parents could know what their children were learning.

Lowering the reporting threshold for the higher education foreign funding, creating K to 12 reporting, and also looking into endowment funding, as well as disclosure to intelligence agencies about what money is coming in.

Parents need to know so that they can make decisions whether they want their child in the classroom or not, and also whether school officials are receiving compensation, or donations from foreign entities.

Finally, there must be consequences. When these rules are broken, foreign actors, as well as schools, be they universities or districts, must be held accountable for that.

Chairman WALBERG. Thank you. Dr. Cooper, colleges and universities often blame a lack of State funding for college costs increasing, excuse me, twice as fast as inflation.

Increased costs always get my throat, over the last two decades, yet those very same colleges have billions of dollars to spare when it comes to hiring administrators, funding DEI projects, or renovating their new football stadiums.

In your view, is the lack of affordability at many institutions a funding issue, or a spending problem?

Mr. COOPER. I would say it is a spending problem. The United States colleges and universities spend more per student than any other colleges and universities in the developed world, more than twice as much as many European counties. What is more, State funding has actually been increasing on a per student basis over the last 10 years or so, yet we still see tuition go up.

I would argue that it is not a State funding, which is the issue, it is the underlying costs, which are the issue.

Chairman WALBERG. Okay. Thank you. Mr. Taylor, as you know we almost got WIOA reform across the finish line last Congress. You talked in your testimony about provisions of that bill that would improve the Nation's workforce system, but for members who are new to this Committee, in this Congress, could you talk at a high level about why it is important for Congress to finish our work on those reform efforts?

Second, I would add to that, in other words, why is WIOA reform an important effort for us to take back up this Congress?

Mr. TAYLOR. Mr. Chairman, with the reauthorization of WIOA, we have a generational opportunity to strengthen our Nation's laws to ensure that American workers have the skills and the knowledge to succeed. You mentioned earlier we have got 8 million—almost 8 million jobs open in this country. We need to figure out how to solve for that gap.

Employers are hurting, and it therefore affects American competitiveness. Many workers are seeking an alternative path to a job that does not involve a 4-year degree. WIOA and its programs are an opportunity for us to deliver that to workers, and key to delivering on this promise, is to ensure that more, not less WIOA dollars, go to skilling and upskilling dollars that provide quality.

That is what this is all about. What we know with everything that AI is about to do to us, from a displacement standpoint, WIOA becomes more important, not less.

Chairman WALBERG. Yes. Thank you. Then briefly, Ms. Neily, give us your opinion why in recent years as parents have re-engaged, especially after COVID, that they are seeing regularly as a danger to our public education system especially, but to education in general?

Mrs. NEILY. Unfortunately, parents when they started to get engaged in the system ask questions and demanded accountability that the educational industrial complex was not prepared to offer. They have been used to having our children behind closed doors for decades, spending money as they want, and programing them as they see fit.

The Michigan Democratic party in the wake of the 2022 midterm elections said that the purpose of a public education is to teach students what society needs them to know. They presupposed that they know what families need—what students need to know, not what families want them to learn.

I think there is a big divide, and that is why I am excited that we have an administration that now views families and students as stakeholders in this discussion, rather than just the activists and organizations that have been funding and demanding money for so long.

Chairman WALBERG. Thank you. I now recognize my friend from Connecticut, Mr. Courtney.

Mr. COURTNEY. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and thank you to the witnesses for being here today. Before I go into my questions, I have to at least put on the record that when WIOA was agreed to by both sides, it was actually included in the continuing resolution that was submitted by Speaker Mike Johnson, and then within the space of less than 6 hours, because of the intervention of the Trump transition team, lead by Elon Musk, that there were too many pages in the CR, that provision was stripped from the bill.

We would—today, if the Speaker had stuck to the agreement that he had agreed to and negotiated, we would have those WIOA reforms in place today, but unfortunately again, the external pressure by the incoming administration tanked it. That is just again, a real step backward for all of the issues that we agree on in terms of filling the job openings that are in the U.S. economy today.

Mr. Scott began his remarks talking about the elephant in the room. There is, in my opinion, two elephants. One is to abolish the

Department of Education. The second is the Reconciliation Bill, which again, we are seeing, you know, reporting that huge grant programs and tax assistance for higher education are on the chopping block.

The human sacrifice to make sure that President Trump gets his tax cuts for the rich. That is what is being discussed right now in terms of paying for the Reconciliation Bill.

Attorney Nelson, pop quiz for you. The Department of Education was created by statute in 1979. To abolish the Department of Education, Congress would actually have to vote on legislation to eliminate the agency. Is that correct?

Mrs. NELSON. Yes.

Mr. COURTNEY. Right. Since the enactment of the Department of Education, there have been consistent attempts by far right winged Republicans in Congress, the last one as recently as March 24, 2023. Mr. Massie offered an amendment to H.R. 5 to abolish the Department of Education. That measure was defeated 265 to 161, 60 Republicans voted in my opinion, sensibly, to make sure the Department of Education stayed in place.

Again, the President is going to issue his executive orders, pretending that he is actually doing—achieving this goal, but as we have seen so far in the Federal District Courts where his executive orders have actually been put to the test of Article 1, Section 9 in terms of Congress's authority for funding programs, he is batting 0 for 3.

Again, I think it is important for us to remember a reality check that if the Department of Education's existence actually resides in this branch of government in terms of moving forward.

Among the programs that the Department of Education funds talking about workforce needs is the Perkins Grant Program, and again, in my district, visiting career technical trade schools talking to comprehensive high schools that are now creating career pathway programs, with money coming from the U.S. Department of Education, to pay for welding boots, setups for nursing programs.

The fact of the matter is that the Department of Education is a major, major partner and contributor to again, achieving the goals, Mr. Taylor, that you have mentioned, is that correct?

Mr. TAYLOR. Yes.

Mr. COURTNEY. Thank you. Now, in terms of the Reconciliation Bill, which again, we have seen that every Committee, you know, in Mar-a-Lago has been asked to again, offer up offsets and pay for's to pay for the tax cuts. One of the proposals that again, was reported by Politico, is a Republican proposal would make college scholarships taxable income.

Again, Mr. Chairman, I would ask to enter into the record an article from Forbes Magazine, hardly a far-left publication, that again, describes what this proposal is, is that to make scholarships taxable.

Chairman WALBERG. Without objection.

[The information of Mr. Courtney follows:]

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Most Americans agree that obtaining a college education is important for economic success, and that it should be less expensive, a New America analysis finds. Republican lawmakers are considering a change to tax policy that would make college more expensive for students receiving grants and scholarships to help pay their tuition bill.

Republicans are gearing up to extend tax cuts from the 2017 Tax Cuts and Jobs Act that mostly benefitted wealthier Americans, per an Urban-Brookings Tax Policy Center analysis, along with other new spending on their policy priorities such as immigration. To pay for the tax cuts and new spending, Republican lawmakers are considering slashing dozens of federal programs and benefits—including making college scholarships that help students pay for tuition, taxable income.

In a leaked document, obtained by Politico, of programs and existing tax breaks Republicans are considering changing to help pay for continuing the 2017 tax cuts, making all scholarships and fellowships taxable income stands out as a proposal that would immediately make college more expensive for the millions of students who receive grants and scholarships to help pay their tuition and

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students are constantly told that one way they can help make it less expensive is to get good grades so they can win a scholarship.

Are Scholarships Taxed At All Now?

Currently, if a student receives grants and scholarships that are used to pay tuition and fees, as well as books and supplies, they are not considered taxable income . Scholarships that cover expenses not directly related to educational activities, for example housing, food and transportation, are considered taxable income, and are meant to be reported to the IRS.

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It is not clear from the document whether the plan would include other free money for college, like need-based grants. But, the IRS treats all grants and scholarships the same. Any amount that exceeds what students are charged for tuition, fees, and books and supplies, is considered taxable income.

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college. The amounts individual students receive varies widely, but it is likely that many of these students would be impacted if lawmakers made scholarships taxable.

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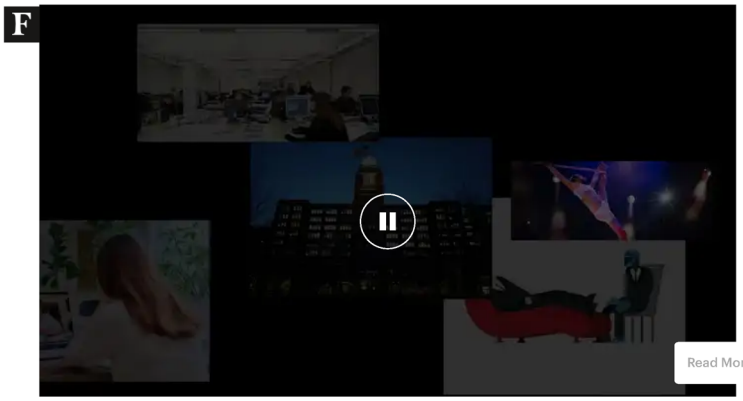
Fewer graduate students, at 43% of a population of over 4.5 million graduate students, receive grantsscholarships and fellowships to pay for their education. Graduate students who do receive grants and scholarships often receive higher amounts, as they are frequently studying in programs like law, medicine, and science fields where the price of tuition is higher than for undergraduate students. If scholarships were suddenly taxable, graduate students would likely face the higher tax bills than undergraduate students as a result.



How Much Does The Scholarship Tax Break Cost The Government?

Eliminating the tax break for scholarships would, according to the leaked document, save $54 billion

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hard-working college students and their families, as a way to pay for tax cuts that will mostly benefit very high-income individuals and companies the most.

How Would This Change Impact Students Who Rely On Scholarships?

Ending the tax-free status of scholarships would have a huge impact on the affordability of college for students who rely on those funds to make it possible to attend. This change would also automatically devalue the generous philanthropic contributions from colleges, individuals, and companies that donate to scholarship funds around the country.

Take these two examples, which assume the student has no other income for simplicities sake, one an expensive private institution and the other a more affordable public university:

1. Undergraduate tuition and fees at Duke University, in North Carolina are just over $65,000 per academic year. But Duke provides large need- and merit- based scholarships, which for some students, cover full tuition. A student receiving a full tuition scholarship could end up facing a tax bill of approximately $6,000 if the law was changed to make tuition scholarship taxable, assuming the person had no other income.

2. Undergraduate Tuition and fees at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill are just under $9,000 per academic year for students from North Carolina. UNC-CH also provides need- and merit- based scholarships that can cover full tuition. In this instance, the student would potentially face no tax bill, since the scholarship amount is less than the $14,600 standard deduction for single filers. But, if the student works, even a modest amount, their income from work would be added to the scholarship and lead to a larger tax bill than if they were only working part time.

Approximately 40% of full time and 74% of part-time college students work, NCES notes. Adding scholarships funds to the taxable income of working students would raise their costs for college significantly.

Both the examples above would harm students, but the impact could potentially be more significant for lower income people. These students are more likely to attend community colleges and public universities with lower tuition, reducing the risk of a tax bill if scholarship were made taxable. However, lower income students are also more likely to need to work to pay for other bills while in college.

If scholarships are made taxable, then students from wealthier families, who can afford not to work

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The tax bills from changing how scholarships are treated could also land on parents, if they claim their college-aged student as a dependent for tax purposes. Whether it is the student or the parents who bear the cost, it would make the burden of paying for college much heavier for many families.

Students never actually pocket any of the money from scholarships that are used to pay tuition and fees, which can be very significant amounts, especially at high-cost private institutions. Most scholarships that pay tuition and fees are applied directly to a student's account with their school. Even scholarships from outside organizations are typically sent directly to colleges. So, the result of this change could be students facing a tax bill of thousands of dollars for funds that went straight to their school to pay tuition.

These proposals are all a long way from becoming law, so nothing has changed yet, but they do indicate a willingness from Republicans to cut tax breaks for scholarships that help millions of students, many of them from low- and middle-income families pay for college, in order to extend tax breaks that provide much greater benefits to wealthy families than low income ones.

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Mr. COURTNEY. Thank you. Again, I think really it does not take a lot of imagination, and maybe again, Attorney Nelson can help with this. It is just that taxing the scholarships raises costs, and shifts costs to students, in terms of college affordability. Is that correct?

Mrs. NELSON. Yes, it would.

Mr. COURTNEY. Again, today's sort of discussion, which is sort of beginning on this premise that, you know, we are going to have a normal discussion, as far as education policy. The fact of the matter is that the elephants in the room that Mr. Scott talked about in terms of basically blowing up the Department of Education, and shifting costs to students is the real test, and that is what we are going to be confronted with.

Again, as the Reconciliation Bill comes forward in any package to abolish the Department of Education, and again, I look forward to joining those Republicans who voted no to abolish the Department of Education to make sure that that measure fails. I yield back.

Chairman WALBERG. Thank you, gentleman. I recognize the gentleman from South Carolina, Mr. Wilson.

Mr. WILSON. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and we are very fortunate that we actually will be joined soon by the Ambassador to the United Nations, Elise Stefanik. That will certainly enhance our hearing today. With that in mind, as we consider the State of education, I know first-hand of the positive parts of this, and that I am grateful my wife Roxanne taught at an alternative school, giving young students the opportunity of a second chance.

My father served on the school board in Charleston, South Carolina, and my wife and I appreciate teachers where after the third grade our four sons succeeded in math, only because of educators, resulting in our oldest son Alan being the Attorney General of South Carolina.

Our second son is an orthopedic surgeon. Our third son is commercial real eState, and our youngest is in industrial engineering. These successes are really due to educators making a difference. With that in mind, I believe it is because of the success of local elected school boards, and I very much support President Donald Trump for his courage to promote local elected school boards, with the elimination of the duplicative, wasteful, interfering, and Federal Department of Education.

The funding, clearly, should go to the students, and not to bureaucrats. With that in mind, Dr. Cooper, the American Enterprise Institute is greatly appreciated for making a difference promoting limited government expanded freedom. The AEI is crucial for addressing the challenges of American families, and we want to thank you for AEI.

In your testimony, you note that the Grad Plus Program provides effectively unlimited loans to students, allowing them to borrow institutionally determine attendance. In other words, whether a school says is 10,000 or 10 million, the Federal Government will provide a loan.

The creation of this has coincided with doubling of the amount of graduate students borrowing. Given the structure of uncapped

lending, is there evidence that colleges have used this to unduly increase tuition?

Mr. COOPER. There is absolutely evidence to that effect. As you mentioned, the Grad Plus Program is effectively unlimited. Students can borrow up to the cost of attendance, as defined by the institution, which means that if the institution says it costs $200,000 or 200 million dollars, students are legally allowed to borrow up to that limit, defined by the institution.

This has resulted in increases in tuition at the graduate level. A study published last year found that for every $1.00 of additional Grad Plus money that went out the door, colleges hiked grad school tuition by 64 cents. The Grad Plus Program has grown enormously in scale and scope since it was created in 2006, and graduate student loans now account for half of new student loans issued every year by the Federal Government.

I would argue that, you know, the Grad Plus Program has gotten relatively out of control, and some sensible caps in borrowing are needed.

Mr. WILSON. Well, we look forward to AEI coming and producing alternatives. With that in mind too, Mr. Taylor, you were right that the workforce training has delivered tremendous success with partnerships between the employers and educators. A Stronger Workforce for America Act was authored by our former Chair, Virginia Foxx.

Do you see what has been the success of that? In my home State of South Carolina, we are so grateful. In the district I represent Michelin Corporation, the largest manufacturing facility in the world. BMW, we want everybody to have an X5. Those are made in South Carolina.

Then while you are at it, we can buy a Volvo, a Mercedes van, Samsung products, Bridgestone, Japan, and Lockheed Martin, Boeing 787–10. We will be happy to sell everything because of workforce development, so how can this be achieved?

Mr. TAYLOR. Well, you have taken my comments because that is it. It speaks for itself. Industry has benefited the economy in South Carolina, and ultimately in our country and globally has benefited from that successful piece of litigation, legislation. I think we need more of it. We need to commit and double down on it, and so we violently agree that this has meant a significant win for employers and employees.

Mr. WILSON. Well, hey, it is job creation.

Mr. TAYLOR. Right.

Mr. WILSON. We see it as South Carolina is now the leading exporter of cars and tires of any State in the union. I do not want people in Michigan to know that, but that is true. With that in mind, Ms. Neily, too, indeed parents are under attack, but I am really grateful that Representative Julia Letlow, and the Republicans in the House passed the Parents Bill of Rights. Is this legislation working?

Mrs. NEILY. It is a terrific first step. We look forward to continued engagement. We think there needs to be teeth. There needs to be actual, you know, it needs to be passed by the Senate, and but I am optimistic that going forward we will be able to make sure

that we deliver as a country for American parents, and that we actually listen to them.

Mr. WILSON. Well, thank you all for being here today. I yield back.

Chairman WALBERG. Thank you for most of your comments, Mr. Wilson. We are still the auto capital. I recognize my friend from California now, Mr. Takano.

Mr. TAKANO. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Cooper, do you believe that the Department of Education should be abolished?

Mr. COOPER. Well, I think that the Department of Education was——

Mr. TAKANO. I am just looking for a yes or no answer.

Mr. COOPER. I think whether the programs that are currently operated by the Department of Education——

Mr. TAKANO. Do you think that the Department of Education should be abolished?

Mr. COOPER. I think it is immaterial whether the programs are operated out of Education or the Treasury Department.

Mr. TAKANO. Do you think the Department of Education should be abolished, sir?

Mr. COOPER. I really—I really cannot say because——

Mr. TAKANO. I will take that as a no. Ms. Neily, do you think that the Department of Education should be abolished?

Ms. NEILY. We won two world wars without having a Department of Education.

Mr. TAKANO. You do not believe it should exist.

Ms. NEILY. I did not say that. I said we won two world wars without having a Department of Education.

Mr. TAKANO. Mr. Cooper—Mr. Cooper—Madam, this is my time. Mr. Cooper, do you believe that the Department of Education should be abolished?

Mr. Taylor, Mr. Taylor.

Mr. TAYLOR. I have to agree. I do not have a yes or no answer.

Mr. TAKANO. You do not have a yes or no answer. All right.

Mr. TAYLOR. The work of the Department of Education needs to continue. Whether or not the Department of Education, as an institution. See too often I think we——

Mr. TAKANO. Okay, fine, fine.

Mr. TAYLOR. The work needs to continue.

Mr. TAKANO. I get what you are saying. I get what you are saying. Whether we abolish it, or we reorganize it, do you believe that the President alone, Mr. Cooper, can eliminate the Department of Education, or reorganize it, or does he need a vote of Congress to do so? Does he need to work with Congress to do that?

Mr. COOPER. To eliminate it outright would require a vote of Congress, but there are probably some things he can do by executive order.

Mr. TAKANO. He can just stop funding certain congressionally appropriated programs? He could just say I am not going to fund those, and tell Elon Musk just find that account, and do not fund it?

Mr. COOPER. It would depend on the program.

Mr. TAKANO. Okay. You would agree that there are programs that are congressionally appropriated that he would need, you know, he just does not have the power to impound?

Mr. COOPER. I would argue that if Congress has specifically appropriated funding for a certain program, than you know, the Education Department is obligated to fund that program, but there is some flexibility the Department has.

Mr. TAKANO. All right. Essentially to eliminate the Department of Education, to abolish it, he would need the vote of Congress to do so?

Mr. COOPER. I agree with that. I agree with that.

Mr. TAKANO. Ms. Neily.

Mrs. NEILY. I am not a constitutional scholar, and this is outside of my area of expertise.

Mr. TAKANO. You do not agree that a President—that the Department of Education, which was established in law through a bill passed by Congress, signed into law by the President, that to abolish the Department of Education, that he would also need a vote of Congress to do that?

Mrs. NEILLY. This is outside of my scope of area of expertise.

Mr. TAKANO. You do not know. You do not know, but you are an expert on——

Mrs. NEILLY. I represent a parents' organization.

Mr. TAKANO. Okay, thank you.

Mr. Taylor.

Mr. TAYLOR. Yes, absolutely.

Mr. TAKANO. You would absolutely need to vote. Well, I am glad that we have at least two witnesses, you know, from the majority, who believe that a vote of Congress would be necessary, and I would hope that they would remind my colleagues on the other side of the aisle what happened at USAID over the weekend was illegal.

That a President cannot unilaterally dismantle an agency or a Department that was established in law. That what he did was outside the law and illegal. I mean, this hearing is called The State of American Education, but from what I am seeing from the other side's behavior is that it really should be called The Republicans Surrender to a Would Be King.

I would love to discuss the State of education in America, and I would love to have any semblance of productive discussion in this Committee, but the only solution that Republicans have offered us to the pile of problems that sit before us, whether it is the abysmal childhood literacy rates in this country, rampant gun violence in schools, the astronomical cost of higher education and lifelong shackles of debt that we are signing up our college students for, is to abolish the Department of Education.

Well, either way, let us imagine that legally or illegally, the Department of Education has been dismantled. The Department protects students and veterans who have been defrauded and are victims of predatory loan schemes for profit colleges. This is critical for veterans who are disproportionately affected by the student debt crisis.

Before COVID, student veterans had a 46 percent default rate on their loans. Mr. Cooper, if a veteran is defrauded out of their GI

Bill benefits by one of the institutions known to prey on veterans, can they recoup that benefit?

Mr. COOPER. For veterans aid I am not sure. For Federal student loans, they can submit a claim to the Borrower Defense Process to have their loans discharged.

Mr. TAKANO. Well, the answer is no. Once the GI Bill education benefits have been used by the students, they are gone forever. My Republican colleagues continue to propose cutting regulations, which protect these student veterans, including a loan relief after attending a failed school, rules that prevent colleges from preying on veteran's GI benefits, and tools to discharge debt for students who have been defrauded by their institution. I yield back Mr. Chairman.

Chairman WALBERG. I thank the gentleman, and I recognize the gentleman from Florida—Georgia, excuse me, Georgia, Mr. Allen.

Mr. ALLEN. Yes, we were in Florida last week. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, for holding this important hearing today. Before I ask questions, I would like to briefly touch on school choice. Of course, we hear the same old talking points from the other side, yes. We got to turn education in this country around, and it is going to take some bold, strong efforts to do that.

Innovation is where it is at. Somehow, we have got to motivate students too. I mean obviously in this indoctrination of children is ridiculous. I mean, you know, it is reading, writing and arithmetic, you know, it worked real well for a long time. You know, a child's future success is often determined early in life, and part of that quality is their K through 12 education.

Parents and children should have the chance to choose an education path that is right for them. That is why I am so excited to hear the current administration speaking so forcibly in favor of school choice.

It is an 80 percent issue with parents in this country. With that being said, Mr. Taylor, with rising student loan debt and many young people reconsidering the value of the traditional college degree, there is a growing need for businesses to prioritize skills-based hiring over degree requirements.

Last year, the CEOs of Walmart and Home Depot co-authored an op-ed, Not Everyone Needs a College Degree, outlining the importance of this shift across the industries. SHRM has been actively encouraging its members to adopt skills-based hiring practices.

From your perspective, are more businesses embracing this approach, and what additional steps can be taken to accelerate this shift at the national left?

Mr. TAYLOR. The answer is yes. For the last four or 5 years if you were not following it, we have experienced a turnover tsunami, as they call it, as well as the great resignation. We employers need talent. In a knowledge-based economy, you lose if you do not have the best talent.

The best talent does not necessarily, and I want to be clear because we are not anti-college and university degree attainment, the best talent shows up in different ways. With skill to credentials, ultimately what we want is people who can do the work.

Whether or not they have a degree, and whether or not that degree is from a fancy school, employers are committed to allowing—

listen, we have got to fill these jobs, and we are filling the jobs because we have too many people who are under skilled.

Our job is to eliminate, and I represent the world's largest association of H.R. professionals, we have got to get back to finding out do you have the skills to do the job, not necessarily the paper that says you have the skills to do the job.

Mr. ALLEN. Well, let it be said Bill Gates dropped out of college because he happened to know more than the people that were teaching him. Mr. Taylor, while we all understand the value of a 4-year degree, it is becoming clear that we need to shift the narrative around career pathways.

Prior to my tenure in Congress, I owned a construction company in Georgia. I understand first-hand the importance of having a trained workforce. Currently, there are over 400,000 open jobs in construction, and 40 percent of the construction workforce is set to retire in the next decade.

Congress has taken an important step in supporting individuals for certain skilled trade careers by championing the bipartisan Workforce Pell Act, which would expand Pell grant eligibility for short-term training programs. However, with critical labor shortages, additional action is needed.

Mr. Taylor, beyond this legislation, what more can Congress do to expand access to skilled trades in education, both in high schools, and through workforce training programs to build a strong talent pipeline? In other words, there are some people that are motivated by other things.

Mr. TAYLOR. Right.

Mr. ALLEN. Like skills. How do we tap into that?

Mr. TAYLOR. Well, it starts in the K through 12 system. I remember going through school, and we recognized—we have everyone stand up at the end of your 12th grade and say who is going to college. The people who were not going to college were not recognized. We have got to start with letting people know it is okay not to go pursue formal education in the way that we have historically thought of that.

That it is okay to go get and acquire skills and they have been credentialed, and then ultimately a credential that says to an employer you can do the work. The narrative must change early that you have not failed because you did not pursue college. That is number one.

Second, and you have rightly pointed out, the passage of a legislation. We have got to now talk about it a lot, and encourage employers while there are people who will say they will hire someone without a degree, what all of SHRM's research says is you put someone in front of you, and that person does not have a degree, but the other person has experience, we still have a bias toward people who have degrees, even for jobs that they clearly do not require degrees.

This is going to require a collective commitment by industry, H.R. professionals, and thanks to you we have government backing to make jobs available for people who can do the jobs irrespective of the skills—the degree that they may or not may not have.

Mr. ALLEN. Mr. Taylor, I am out of time. I have two more questions that I want to submit to you, and I would like to provide, if you would provide answers to those questions for the record.

Mr. TAYLOR. Will do so immediately, thank you.

Mr. ALLEN. Mr. Chairman, I yield back.

Chairman WALBERG. Thank you, gentleman. Now, I recognize the gentlelady from North Carolina, Ms. Adams, Dr. Adams.

Ms. ADAMS. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and Ranking Member for hosting this hearing today, and to the witnesses, thank you for being here. Mr. Taylor, it is good to see you again. Let me just say this. I spent 40 years in the classroom, 40 years. I did not read about education in a report. I lived it, and I will tell you right now that the way things are going, we are failing our children.

That starts with teachers because if we do not invest in the people standing at the front of the classroom, we cannot expect students to succeed. Ms. Nelson, my first question is to you. According to the National Center for Education Statistics, according to the 2020–21 school year, only 6 percent of teachers are identified as black.

Why is Federal investment in teacher diversity crucial to all student's success?

Ms. NELSON. Well, first, Representative Adams, thank you so much for your service as a teacher. It is critical that students in our multi-racial democracy see themselves in the teachers that stand before them in their classrooms, in the school administrators, and in other leaders in this country.

It is important that they see representation and diversity in every position of leadership, and it starts in the classroom. It starts with their teachers. We also know the Legal Defense Fund's Thurgood Marshall Institute has done research that proves that when black students are taught by black teachers, and are taught by a more diverse faculty, their achievement soars.

If we want to invest in our students, we want to invest in a diverse faculty as well.

Ms. ADAMS. Thank you. You know, this is not just about who is in the classroom. It is also about which institutions are being given the resources to uplift black students. HBCUs make up 3 percent of colleges in America, but we are producing 17 percent of all black bachelor's degree graduates, 24 percent of black STEM degree graduates, 40 percent of black engineers.

Ms. Nelson, how are HBCUs uniquely positioned to support the growth and development of black students and their communities? If you can be brief, I want to get some more questions.

Ms. NELSON. Sure. HBCUs have long punched above their weight, despite the fact that they have been deprived of adequate funding. We know that 13 billion dollars of land grants have not been distributed to the institutions that deserve them by mandate of statute, so HBCUs deserve greater investment, and as you noted, they not only deliver the greatest number of graduates, they delivered 40 percent of CBC members as well.

Ms. ADAMS. Yes, ma'am. Thank you very much for that, and thank you for the work that you are doing. I really appreciate that very much. Mr. Taylor, let me ask you a question. As Chair of the White House Initiative on HBCUs during the first Trump adminis-

tration, you saw firsthand how underfunding holds these institutions back.

HBCUs contribute 16.5 billion dollars to our economy every year, and that is the return on investment. Our schools are still being short-changed. Do you believe that Congress should be investing more, and if so, what do you think is the hold up?

Mr. TAYLOR. Well, and thank you for the opportunity. For those who do not know, I ran the Thurgood Marshall College Fund, the country's largest organization committed to advancing and protecting the policies for our country's publicly supported, so State HBCUs.

I think I start with the fact that HBCUs are HBCUs. That is not a race-based designation. In fact, several HBCUs have more non-black students than black students so that distinguishes them from them. It is not a race-based distinction. These are institutions that are open to all, and historically have shown that to be the case, so it is really good that we have the numbers, but even still, these institutions are not that.

What I did under the Trump administration, along with the support of Secretary Betsy DeVos at the time, and President Trump, was to get the highest level of funding for HBCUs ever to that point. It still was not enough, to your point, and the Biden administration has continued that work, so this is not a political issue for us. These are incredibly important historic jewels that need to be funded.

It is not about the institutions, it is about the students who attend those institutions, who we, in the employer side, need to fill those 7 or 8 million open jobs, so they are critical to our workforce diversity.

Ms. ADAMS. Thank you. Let me move on, and ask about the Augustus Hawkins Center of Excellence, the grant, a program that is designed to support an array of teachers, and address shortages and that funded an HBCU in my State.

Mr. TAYLOR. Yes.

Ms. ADAMS. North Carolina Central, NCCU as we say. It was listed in the recent Office of Management and Budget memo, freezing Federal funding. Now, would you agree that this grant was on that list?

Mr. TAYLOR. That concerns me. I have two NCCU graduates sitting behind me, one a three-time North Carolina Central graduate, and one who received his undergraduate degree, who happens, by the way, not to be black, and he attended a historically black college and university.

Anything that takes away from not funding or defunding programs that work is not good for our country.

Ms. ADAMS. Yes. You mentioned that not all of the students who attend are African American students. As a matter of fact, we have a former Governor of North Carolina, who got—Governor Easley, who received his degree from NCCU. Do you believe that the attempt to freeze those funds align with the Committee?

Chairman WALBERG. The gentlelady's time has expired.

Ms. ADAMS. In expanding the educator pipeline, and you can send me that in writing. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I yield back.

Chairman WALBERG. Thank you. I thank the gentlelady. I now recognize the gentleman from Pennsylvania, Mr. Thompson.

Mr. THOMPSON. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and thank you to all of our witnesses that are here today, on an incredibly important topic. I look forward to working with you, Mr. Chairman, your leadership of this Committee throughout this Congress.

Ms. Neily, I am a firm believer that a student's health and growth contribute to academic success, and as you have noted, and we have had a troubling trend in recent years of academic declines across the country. To that end, I recently introduced H.R. 649, the Whole Milk for Healthy Kids Act, which allows school food service providers the flexibility to serve students all types of milk in school lunches, including whole milk.

Can you describe, as a parent yourself, the benefit of providing students with a whole milk option in the school cafeteria?

Mrs. NEILY. Sure. Well, as a parent, my daughter is underweight, and whole milk actually is one of the few things that she drinks, and so I am happy that I know she is at least getting some nutrients, in addition to all the Doritos she has. Beyond that, certainly we want schools to have the flexibility to serve students both what they want, as well as what they need.

I think we have all seen the pictures of school lunches that have been thrown out, apples that are being wasted, both from a financial standpoint, as well as just a nutritional standpoint. I think that is of concern, and so they have schools be flexible to choose what they want, I think it is really important.

Mr. THOMPSON. Well, thank you for that. As the Co-Chair of the bipartisan Career and Technical Education Caucus, once again, this Congress I continue to see the rewards of high quality, low cost, CTE programs that provide learners of all ages with tools they need to succeed in the 21st Century.

Part of the recent surge in enrollment in career technical education is thanks in large part, is to substantial investments reforms Congress has made to CTE over the years, much of that thanks to this Committee, including most recently the passage by legislation Strengthening Career and Technical Education in the 21st Century Act.

In 2018, it was subsequently signed into law by President Trump. Mr. Taylor, in your testimony I noted two great examples of career and technical education in North Carolina and New York. Can you talk more about how these types of programs are equipping students with the skills and knowledge they need to fill the more than 8 million job openings in the United States today?

Mr. TAYLOR. Yes, and thank you for this opportunity. Thank you also for your support of the legislation around cybersecurity and increasing the number of individuals who have the skills to help us from a national security standpoint, so thank you very much, Mr. Thompson—Congressman Thompson.

Yes, as specifically mentioned in my comments, and in our submitted proposal that there are two programs, one in North Carolina, one in New York, one and two, they are all over, but they specifically focus—one is on agriscience, and it starts in high school, so we do not wait until college to begin building this pipeline.

It is letting these students understand that there is a real career in agriculture and agri-business, and there is significant investment, so it was very wise—a very wise investment on behalf of this Congress, and it is something that we think needs to continue to be reinforced. It helps employers in the back, and the one thing that I know, I have met with the Presidents of John Deere, the Presidents and CEOs of Cargill, and what they have all said to us is agri-business is not sexy.

People do not grow up and say send my kid to go work for an agri-business, although it is absolutely a part of America, our American economy, and our global dominance. We have said that sort of investment is critical, and starting in high school through those programs, introduces students who would otherwise not know about it, or in the case of African American students, who say historically we were pathed toward agri-business jobs, and we do not want to go back there.

It is critical that we say there are huge opportunities there for all students, and so that is a great example of a program. We also have other programs that focus very early on cybersecurity training. Part of the problem when we look at the act of diversity—for example, employers who hire, is that the pipeline did not provide us kids who were skilled, who were even aware of the opportunities in the cybersecurity world.

Add to it what is going to happen with AI. If we do not get this early, we are in big trouble, and for all our efforts to want a diverse workforce, we are not going to be able to do it because we have not prepared and offered through the pipeline, a group of students who are even aware of the possibilities.

Mr. THOMPSON. Well, thank you very much. I do think that given the fact that career and technical education, including agriculture, is so much about innovation and technology today, that it is getting sexier, you know. I had not thought about it in those terms, but thank you for putting that in my head.

Dr. Cooper, I am out of time, but I have a question. I will forward it to you, it basically is about accountability, and national accountability in higher education, and the role of states, which I, you know, some states do better than others, investing in higher education, and it makes a difference, so thank you Mr. Chairman.

Chairman WALBERG. I thank the sexy Chairman of Agriculture for your questions.

Mr. THOMPSON. I knew that was a mistake when I said it, actually.

Chairman WALBERG. That is a picture in my mind we will not forget. Now I go to the Harley rider from New Jersey, Mr. Norcross.

Mr. NORCROSS. Thank you, Chairman, and thank you for putting together this hearing known as the State of the American Education, and congratulations on your first hearing as Chairman. What a great topic because it impacts literally every one of our lives.

Many of us talk about education as that pathway to a future that we all want. At many times, we do not agree on is what education is, and should be, and the discussions say that it is absolutely this,

or absolutely is that. It is not. It is a little bit of each. It is as diverse as we are Americans.

The idea that one size fits all in education just is not the way to go. Quite frankly, you know, we have heard time after time that in order to make it in America, you had to go to college. Well, you know what? That might be true for certain areas of careers. I want my doctor, medical doctor, certainly to go to college, and we might even need a couple lawyers.

I am not sure we need all of them, but I grew up as—I raised my son. I was a single father, and it was challenging, and that is 46 years ago. I did something that was a little unique at the time that goes to part of the discussion here. I wanted to make sure that he and my daughter would see that you do not have to follow a certain road.

I became a room mom for a bunch of fourth graders. I will tell you 46 years ago they were not real interested in seeing a male walk through that door, but for the education of those children, I think it was incredibly important, and we have come so far since then. Mr. Thompson, hey, I think that work is sexy. I will tell you.

A career in technical education, our education system needs to be focused more on what the career—what the job is. I know it is great to have one of those pieces of paper up behind you, but that is not a job. That is not a career. How we get there is really something that is critical.

I focused a little bit on the earliest years and how do we get there. We go through the schools in my district, and quite frankly, around the country, we see there are some real challenges. Schools are in dilapidated conditions, cyber is just a thought if you do not bring it in.

That is why the Ranking Member, Mr. Scott and I introduced a bill called Rebuilding America's Schools Act and invests 130 billion to go to those districts who need it most. Not everybody needs to have the shiny marble hall, but we need the basic educational ability to go into a school and do that. When we talk about creating opportunities for jobs, when we first started vocational schools, and inside regular high schools were happening everywhere.

That fell off the edge, and now they are starting to come back because they are finding out—that next generation, to work with your hands is a value. Mr. Taylor, I just want to touch base with one thing. You mentioned that it starts with elementary education. I say it starts with parents.

Mr. TAYLOR. Yes.

Mr. NORCROSS. They say no matter what, I have a doctor, I have a lawyer, and I have an electrician. I value each of them, and we as a nation have to value them. Ms. Nelson, can you talk about infrastructure in school, and why that is important, the basics have to be there?

Mrs. NELSON. Absolutely. Children should be in facilities that enable them to learn. We know that across the country there are fundamental inequities in school funding that leads to fundamental inequities in infrastructure.

In the State of Maryland, in Baltimore, for example, we have litigated cases that have shown that the school system there is suf-

fering from buildings that have leaky ceilings, that have, you know, bathrooms that do not function.

Unfortunately, that is not limited to that State. There is the corridor of shame, and the State of South Carolina where there are students who receive minimally adequate education, if that. This is a chronic issue, and sadly it cleaves along racial lines. It is something that we could certainly address with a better funding mechanism, and that is something that this Congress could take up.

Mr. NORCROSS. Thank you. Mr. Taylor, what is your view on this, and on the infrastructure, particularly in the early years?

Mr. TAYLOR. I think it is really important, obviously, for students to have great facilities, great teachers, et cetera, but I do not think the answer is solely throwing more money at it. We look at some school districts in this country who are in the State of Maryland, for example, who have no funding problem. Baltimore is one such example where more money has not solved the problem.

I think we have to be very careful about the idea that we can solve all of this by putting more money, and that often times there is money, but it is not applied in the ways that that will most effectively benefit the children.

Mr. NORCROSS. Let us be clear, we are not talking about throwing money, we are talking about building infrastructure. That is very different than giving a check.

Mr. TAYLOR. Often the question, the comment, the argument is we need more money, to provide those foundational and infrastructural investments. It ultimately comes back to yes, there no—there are few people I have seen disagree with the fact that children from every neighborhood, not withstanding their ZIP code, should go into nice buildings, and have air-conditioning and heat like others, et cetera.

That is not for debate, but then if it comes—but we need more money to do it, and the only point is we, as employers, who will pay into taxes, want to make sure that the investment we were making, that it actually yields a return on that investment in employers—in employment.

Mr. NORCROSS. Thank you. As I am looking at my seconds going down, this is a great start to conversations.

Chairman WALBERG. Your time has expired.

Mr. NORCROSS. Sorry, Congratulations.

Chairman WALBERG. I know electricians. They can keep the juice going.

Mr. TAYLOR. I am a single dad too, Mr. Norcross, I like that.

Chairman WALBERG. Now, it is an opportunity to recognize the gentlelady from my birth State of Illinois, Mrs. Miller.

Mrs. MILLER. Thank you, Chairman Walberg, and thank you to all of our witnesses for being here today. Mrs. Neily, you mentioned that Parents Defending Education has identified more than 12 million children in 1,100 school districts across our country impacted by parental exclusion policies.

Our colleagues on the left sometimes argue that we are scaremongering to say that parents are being cut out of their children's education. Can you explain why this is a very real problem, and how parents really do get cut out?

Mrs. NEILY. Representative Miller, as a parent, and as a grandparent, you know that we have to sign permission slips to give our children aspirin or sunscreen in school. The idea that our schools are not offering intrusive mental health counseling telling children they are born in the wrong body, that mommy and daddy might not love them because of their politics or their religion, is something that is so abhorrent that this is happening with our tax dollars to our children behind closed doors.

This is happening in 2025 in America. This is not a good use of taxpayer dollars. It is destroying the parent child relationship, and it is not just LGBT students that are hearing this. Last year, or 2 years ago FOX News discovered that 349 students, or teachers, were arrested for teacher student, for child sex crimes, 75 percent of which were with teachers, or with their students.

These are horrifying statistics. We teach our children about stranger danger, and so to have our public officials turn around and say you should keep secrets from Mom and Dad is something that is so devastating to a country, to a nation. That is appalling that we are even having this discussion right now.

Mrs. MILLER. Mrs. Neily, you mentioned that China has waged an influence campaign to get themselves implanted in our K through 12 schools. What do we know about how many schools China has infiltrated, and what are they teaching in these schools?

Mrs. NEILY. We released a report called—into Confucious classrooms, called Little Red Classrooms, and we identified 143 districts around the country, in 34 states, including 20 near military bases where Chinese teachers, Chinese materials, curriculum had come directly from CCP linked entities.

The dollar amounts that were coming to these schools were very low it is well below the Higher Education Act $250,000 threshold, but again, receiving curriculum, receiving books, we do not actually know what is being taught. For all of our friends discussing teaching true history, or in Tiananmen, Taiwan, Tibet, Uyghurs genocide.

Are those covered in these classes? Almost certainly not, and so, I think there is a real concern as to who is coming in, and what our children have access to behind our backs.

Mrs. MILLER. I do want to challenge the parents in our country and taxpayers, to get involved, and find out what is in the curriculum in the school districts that they are supporting or their children are in. Books are silent teachers.

To close, I would like to commend President Trump for his strong leadership to safeguard and strengthen our Nation's education system. Last month he issued an executive order to refocus schools on academic excellence, and ensure education remains free from political indoctrination.

On the same day he signed another executive order promoting school choice and empowering parents to determine the best educational paths for their children. These decisive actions affirm the President's commitment to an educational system that prioritizes students and parents over government bureaucrats and teacher unions. Thank you, and I yield back.

Chairman WALBERG. I thank the gentlelady, and I recognize my faith-filled friend from Georgia, Mrs. McBath.

Mrs. MCBATH. Thank you, Chairman Walberg, and Ranking Member Scott, and to our witnesses for being with us today. I have read your testimoneys. Instead of addressing gun violence in our schools, or taking real steps to get a handle on how expensive a year of child care, or getting an education has become in this country, my Republican colleagues have been circulating a 50-page document going over ways that they can raise revenue at the expense of American families. Hidden deep in the leaked GOP memo is a proposal for a new tax on State and Federal scholarships and fellowships, which I would like to submit digitally for the record.

[The information of Mrs. McBath follows:]

WAYS AND MEANS COMMITTEE

Health

Limit Federal Health Program Eligibility Based on Citizenship Status
Up to $35 billion 10-year savings
VIABILITY: HIGH / MEDIUM / LOW

- Currently, many non-citizens who entered the country illegally are eligible for federal health care programs including advance premium tax credits and Medicaid. This policy would remove specified categories of non-citizens from eligibility for federal health care programs.

Eliminate Medicare Coverage of Bad Debt
Up to $42 billion 10-year savings
VIABILITY: HIGH / MEDIUM / LOW

- Medicare currently reimburses hospitals at 65 percent of bad debt (uncollected cost-sharing that beneficiaries fail to pay), while private payers do not typically reimburse providers for bad debt. This policy brings Medicare more in line with the private sector by gradually reducing the amount that Medicare reimburses providers for bad debt.

Medicare Site Neutrality
Up to $146 billion in 10-year savings
VIABILITY: HIGH / MEDIUM / LOW

- Currently, Medicare and beneficiaries pay more for the *SAME* health care service furnished in hospital outpatient departments (HOPDs) than in physician offices. The budget supports Medicare site neutral payments by equalizing Medicare payments for health care services that can be safely delivered in a physician's office.

Improve Uncompensated Care
Up to $229 billion in 10-year savings
VIABILITY: HIGH / MEDIUM / LOW

- Medicare currently provides additional financial support to hospitals that serve a disproportionate share of low-income patients related to uncompensated care. These payments are limited to hospitals, which fails to acknowledge the amount of uncompensated care delivered in non-hospital settings. This policy reforms

uncompensated care payments by removing the payment from the Medicare Trust Fund and establishing a new uncompensated care fund that will equitably distribute payments to providers based on their true share of charity care and non-Medicare bad debt.

Prevent Dual Classification for Hospitals Under Medicare
Up to $10 billion in 10-year savings
VIABILITY: HIGH / MEDIUM / LOW

- Prevent dual reclassifications for hospitals under Medicare to eliminate double dipping of benefits.

Other Reforms to Obamacare Subsidies
Up to $5 billion in 10-year savings
VIABILITY: HIGH / MEDIUM / LOW

- Reform Obamacare subsidies in the individual market to: lower premiums, lower out-of-pocket costs, direct subsidies to patients over health insurers, and target Premium Tax Credits to the most needy Americans.

Reform Graduate Medical Education (GME) Payments
Up to $10 billion in 10-year savings
VIABILITY: HIGH / MEDIUM / LOW

- Reform Medicare graduate medical education (GME) payments. Enact H.R. 8235, Rural Physician Workforce Preservation Act reported out of the Ways and Means Committee on May 8, 2024. The bill would ensure that 10 percent of newly enacted GME slots would go to truly rural teaching hospitals. Also include a policy that would decrease excess GME payments to "efficient" teaching hospitals.

Geographic Integrity in Medicare Wage Index
Up to $15 billion in 10-year savings
VIABILITY: HIGH / MEDIUM / LOW

- Enact geographic integrity in Medicare's Wage Index calculations to reduce overpayments to urban hospitals.

Repeal DACA Obamacare Subsidies Final Rule
$6 billion in 10-year savings
VIABILITY: HIGH / MEDIUM / LOW

- In May 2024, the Biden Administration finalized a rule that would allow DACA recipients to enroll in subsidized marketplace and basic health program (BHP) plans. The rule expands eligibility by modifying the definition of "lawfully present" to include DACA recipients.

Codify Individual Coverage Health Reimbursement Arrangement (ICHRA) Rule
No budgetary effects
VIABILITY: HIGH / MEDIUM / LOW

- Codify the Individual Coverage Health Reimbursement Arrangement (ICHRA) Treasury rule to allow companies to offer their employees defined benefit contributions towards qualified health plans. Enact H.R. 3799, the Custom Health Option and Individual Care Expense Arrangement Act reported out of the Ways and Means Committee on June 7, 2023.

Second Chances for Rural Hospitals Act (H.R. 8246)
Up to $10 billion in 10-year costs
VIABILITY: HIGH / MEDIUM / LOW

- Increase access to rural emergency care services and facilitate better discharges to post-acute care for patients. Ensure patients can expeditiously access emergency and post-hospital care in long-term care hospitals, nursing homes, and home health programs. Enact H.R. 8246, the Second Chances for Rural Hospitals Act reported out of the Ways and Means Committee on May 8, 2024.

Eliminate Inpatient-only List
Up to $10 billion in 10-year savings
VIABILITY: HIGH / MEDIUM / LOW

- Eliminate the inpatient-only list so more same-day surgeries and procedures can be performed in lower cost, outpatient settings.

Improve Senior Access to Innovation and Telehealth
Up to $20 billion in 10-year costs
VIABILITY: HIGH / MEDIUM / LOW

- Enact H.R. 8261, the Preserving Telehealth, Hospital, and Ambulance Access Act reported out of the Ways and Means Committee on May 8, 2024. **Enact H.R. 2407, the Nancy Gardner Sewell Medicare Multi-Cancer Early Detection Screening Coverage Act (JCA bill)**, H.R. 8816, the American Medical

Innovation and Investment Act, H.R. 1691, the Ensuring Patient Access to Critical Breakthrough Products Act of 2023, and H.R. 4818, the Treat and Reduce Obesity Act of 2023 reported out of the Ways and Means Committee on June 26, 2024.

Reform IRA's Drug Policies
Up to $20 billion in 10-year costs
VIABILITY: HIGH / MEDIUM / LOW

- Reform the Inflation Reduction Act's prescription drug policies to discourage price setting on innovative drugs treating rare patient populations.

Reform Medicare Physician Payments
Up to $10 billion in 10-year costs
VIABILITY: HIGH / MEDIUM / LOW

- Reform Medicare's physician payment system to encourage more predictability and certainty.

Reform Obamacare Market Plan Design and Eligibility
Up to $10 billion in 10-year savings
VIABILITY: HIGH / MEDIUM / LOW

- Reform Obamacare market plan design and eligibility rules such as actuarial value calculations and open enrollment periods.

Recapture excess Affordable Care Act (ACA) subsidies
Up to $46 billion in 10-year savings
VIABILITY: HIGH / MEDIUM / LOW

- Currently, an individual can receive advance payments of the premium tax credit to coincide when health insurance premiums are due each month, based on an estimate of income. If the tax credit is paid in advance, the taxpayer must reconcile the advance credit payments with actual income filed on the tax return and repay any excess tax credits. For individuals with incomes below 400 percent of FPL, any repayment amount is capped. The budget removes limits on repayments of excess premium tax credit payments so any individual who was overpaid in tax credits would have to repay the entire excess amount, regardless of income.

Block Grant GME at CPI-M
Up to $75 billion in 10-year savings

VIABILITY: HIGH / MEDIUM / LOW

- The Federal Government spends more than $20 billion annually in the Medicare and Medicaid programs to train medical residents with little accountability for outcomes. GME reform has been recommended by the independent Medicare Payment Advisory Commission (MedPAC) and included in past presidential budgets. This policy streamlines GME payments to hospitals, while providing greater flexibility for teaching institutions and states to develop innovative and cost-effective approaches to better meet our nation's medical workforce needs.

Repeal Obamacare Subsidies "Family Glitch" Final Rule
Up to $35 billion in 10-year savings
VIABILITY: HIGH / MEDIUM / LOW

- The text of the Affordable Care Act (ACA) made it clear that individuals with affordable employer coverage (as defined in the law) are not eligible to receive Obamacare subsidies for ACA plans. The affordability standard in Obamacare specifically applied only to individuals and not to the cost of family coverage overall. The provision was written this way to reduce the Congressional Budget Office (CBO) score for this provision. In October 2022, the Biden Administration illegally altered the ACA by creating a new affordability standard to both employees and their dependents, running afoul of the text and Congressional intent of the law, resulting in individuals leaving employer coverage and onto ACA plans.

Energy

Repeal Title I of IRA (Excluding: 45Q Carbon Sequestration, 45U Nuclear Power, 45Z Clean Fuels, and EV Tax Credit)
$404.7 billion in 10-year savings
VIABILITY: HIGH / MEDIUM / LOW

- Reducing 45Q, 45U, and 45Z would streamline and reduce government intervention in the energy industry that props up the green energy sector and distorts market competition.

Close the EV credit leasing loophole
$50 billion in 10-year savings
VIABILITY: HIGH / MEDIUM / LOW

- Closing the EV credit leasing loophole ensures that only EV buyers, not lessees, receive tax credits, preserving integrity of the program and preventing misuse of taxpayer dollars.

Tax

Repeal Green Energy Tax Credits
Up to $796 billion in 10-year savings
VIABILITY: HIGH / MEDIUM / LOW

- This option would repeal credits created and expanded under the Inflation Reduction Act. These credits are related to clean vehicles, clean energy, efficient building and home energy, carbon sequestration, sustainable aviation fuels, environmental justice, biofuel, and more. The full cost of the IRA provisions is about $329 billion, which becomes about $800 billion when paired with the tailpipe emission rule designed to dramatically increase the uptake of EVs and EV credit use. Based on political will, there are several smaller reform options available (starting as low as $3 billion) that would repeal a smaller portion of these credits.

End Employee Retention Tax Credit
$70-75 billion in 10-year savings
VIABILITY: HIGH / MEDIUM / LOW

- The Employee Retention Tax Credit (ERTC) is a refundable tax credit aimed at encouraging employers to keep employees on payroll during economic hardships, such as the COVID-19 pandemic. Ending the ERTC would extend the current moratorium on claims processing and eliminate the credit for claims submitted after January 31, 2024, along with introducing stricter penalties for fraud. These changes align with the House-passed *Tax Relief for American Families and Workers Act.*

SSN Requirement for Child Tax Credit
$27.7 billion in 10-year savings
VIABILITY: HIGH / MEDIUM / LOW

- This option would better ensure program integrity by requiring claimants (children *and* parents) to have a Social Security number to be eligible for the CTC. This change enforces a clear eligibility requirement based on Social Security numbers valid for employment, directly aligning these credits with the principle of supporting those who contribute to the economy through work. This measure not only streamlines administration, potentially reducing fraud, but also reinforces the idea that tax-based benefits should reward work and support families genuinely

eligible under the law. TCJA included a provision that required a SSN for each child to claim the CTC which is expiring in 2025.

Endowment Tax Expansion to 14 Percent Rate
$10 billion in 10-year savings
VIABILITY: HIGH / MEDIUM / LOW

- The 2017 Tax Cuts and Jobs Act (TCJA) imposed a new tax on a small group of private nonprofit colleges and universities. Institutions enrolling at least 500 students that have endowment assets exceeding $500,000 per student (other than those assets which are used directly in carrying out the institution's exempt purpose) pay a tax of 1.4 percent on their net investment income. In 2022, the tax raised $244 million from 58 institutions. This would raise that rate to 14%.

H.R. 8913, Increase Applicability of Endowment Tax
$275 million in 10-year savings
VIABILITY: HIGH / MEDIUM / LOW

- H.R. 8913 adjusts the criteria for which students are counted when determining whether a private college or university is subject to an excise tax on its net investment income. This bill incentivizes universities that receive generous U.S. federal tax benefits to either enroll more American students or spend more of their endowment funds on those students to avoid being subject to the endowment tax. This bill would subject roughly 10 to 12 additional schools to the Endowment Tax, all of which could avoid the tax by admitting more American students or spending down their endowments.

H.R. 8914, University Accountability Act
No budgetary effects
VIABILITY: HIGH / MEDIUM / LOW

- H.R. 8914, marked up by the Ways and Means Committee on July 9, 2024, would enact penalties for colleges and universities that violate students' rights under Title VI of the Civil Rights Act (which applies to educational institutions and protects against discrimination). It was ordered reported favorably by a vote of 24 yeas (you and 23 other Republicans) and 12 nays (all Democrats).

Repeal SALT Deduction
$1.0 trillion in 10-year savings relative to TCJA extension
VIABILITY: HIGH / MEDIUM / LOW

- This option would eliminate both the individual and business State and Local Tax deduction. Currently, the cap is $10,000. After 2025, this limitation will expire.

Make $10k SALT Cap Permanent, but Double for Married Couples
$100-$200 billion cost relative to TCJA extension
VIABILITY: HIGH / MEDIUM / LOW

- This option would extend the $10k SALT cap but double it for married couples.

$15k/$30k SALT Cap
$500 billion cost relative to TCJA extension
VIABILITY: HIGH / MEDIUM / LOW

- This option would cap the SALT deduction at $15k for individuals and $30k for married couples.

Eliminate Income/Sales Tax Deduction Portion of SALT
$300 billion cost relative to TCJA extension
VIABILITY: HIGH / MEDIUM / LOW

- This option would eliminate deductibility of state and local income or sales taxes from the SALT deduction, making only property taxes SALT deductible. The $10k SALT cap would expire as scheduled in current law.

Eliminate Business SALT Deduction
$310 billion in 10-year savings
VIABILITY: HIGH / MEDIUM / LOW

- This option would eliminate the business SALT deduction. The individual SALT deduction would be unchanged from current law.

Eliminate the Home Mortgage Interest Deduction
About $1.0 trillion in 10-year savings relative to TCJA extension
VIABILITY: HIGH / MEDIUM / LOW

- This option would fully repeal the deduction for mortgage interest on primary residences. This is a Tax Foundation score.

Lower Home Mortgage Interest Deduction Cap to $500k
About $50 billion in 10-year savings relative to TCJA extension
VIABILITY: HIGH / MEDIUM / LOW

- This option would lower the cap on the home mortgage interest deduction from the TCJA level of $750k to $500k. This is a Tax Foundation score.

Eliminate Nonprofit Status for Hospitals
$260 billion in 10-year savings
VIABILITY: HIGH / MEDIUM / LOW

- More than half of all income by 501(c)(3) nonprofits is generated by nonprofit hospitals and healthcare firms. This option would tax hospitals as ordinary for-profit businesses. This is a CRFB score.

Eliminate Exclusion of Interest on State and Local Bonds
$250 billion in 10-year savings
VIABILITY: HIGH / MEDIUM / LOW

- Interest earned on municipal bonds is currently excluded from taxable income. This option would end the exclusion, making income from municipal bond interest taxable.

End Tax Preferences for Other Bonds
$114 billion in 10-year savings
VIABILITY: HIGH / MEDIUM / LOW

- This option would eliminate the exclusion of interest earned on private activity bonds, Build America bonds, and other non-municipal bonds.

Eliminate Head of Household Filing Status
$192 billion in 10-year savings
VIABILITY: HIGH / MEDIUM / LOW

- The Head of Household filing status provides a larger standard deduction for unmarried individuals who have children. This option would eliminate the Head of Household filing status.

Eliminate the American Opportunity Credit
$59 billion in 10-year savings
VIABILITY: HIGH / MEDIUM / LOW

- The American opportunity tax credit (AOTC) is a credit for qualified education expenses paid for an eligible student for the first four years of higher education.

Taxpayers can get a maximum annual credit of $2,500 per eligible student. This option would repeal the credit.

Eliminate the Lifetime Learning Credit
$26 billion in 10-year savings
VIABILITY: HIGH / MEDIUM / LOW

- The Lifetime Learning Credit ("LLC") provides a nonrefundable tax credit equal to 20 percent of qualified tuition and related expenses of the taxpayer that do not exceed $10,000. This option would repeal the credit.

Replace HSA's with a $9,100 Roth-Style USA Indexed to Inflation
$110 billion in 10-year savings
VIABILITY: HIGH / MEDIUM / LOW

- This option would replace Health Savings Accounts (HSA) with a $9,100 Universal Savings Account indexed to inflation. While it would raise revenue by $110 billion in the budget window, it would have a small cost outside of the budget window. This is a Tax Foundation score.

End Treatment of Meals and Lodging (Other than Military)
$87 billion in 10-year savings
VIABILITY: HIGH / MEDIUM / LOW

- Employer-provided meals and lodging are generally excluded from taxable income if they are for the employer's convenience. This option would eliminate this exclusion for all employees except military personnel, making these benefits taxable and saving $87 billion over 10 years.

Eliminate Deduction for Charitable Contributions to Health Organizations
$83 billion in 10-year savings
VIABILITY: HIGH / MEDIUM / LOW

- Taxpayers can deduct contributions to qualifying health organizations (patient advocacy groups, professional medical associations, and other U.S.-based charitable organizations with 501(c)(3) tax status) from their taxable income. This option would remove the deduction for contributions to health organizations, generating $83 billion in savings over 10 years.

Eliminate Credit for Child and Dependent Care
$55 billion in 10-year savings
VIABILITY: HIGH / MEDIUM / LOW

- Taxpayers can claim a credit for a portion of their child and dependent care expenses (up to $2,100). This option would remove the child and dependent care credit, yielding $55 billion in savings over 10 years.

Eliminate Exclusion of Scholarship and Fellowship Income
$54 billion in 10-year savings
VIABILITY: HIGH / MEDIUM / LOW

- Qualified scholarships and fellowships are generally excluded from taxable income if used for tuition and related expenses. This option would make all scholarship and fellowship income taxable, increasing revenue by $54 billion over 10 years.

Eliminate Employer Paid Transportation Benefits
$50 billion in 10-year savings
VIABILITY: HIGH / MEDIUM / LOW

- Employer-provided transportation benefits (up to $315 per month), like transit passes and parking, are excluded from taxable income. This option would eliminate the tax exclusion for these benefits, generating $50 billion in savings over 10 years.

Eliminate Exemption of Credit Union Income
$30 billion in 10-year savings
VIABILITY: HIGH / MEDIUM / LOW

- Credit unions are exempt from federal income taxes on their earnings. This option would subject credit unions to the federal income tax.

Eliminate Exclusion of Employer Provided On-Site Gyms
$20 billion in 10-year savings
VIABILITY: HIGH / MEDIUM / LOW

- Employer-provided on-site gym facilities intended for employees and their families are excluded from taxable income. This option would make the value of on-site gyms taxable.

Eliminate Deduction of Interest on Student Loans
$30 billion in 10-year savings
VIABILITY: HIGH / MEDIUM / LOW

- Taxpayers can deduct up to $2,500 of interest paid on student loans from their taxable income. This option would eliminate the deduction for student loan interest.

Federal Excise Tax on Federal Unions' Non-Representation Spending
$7 billion in 10-year savings
VIABILITY: HIGH / MEDIUM / LOW

- This option would impose a federal excise tax on non-representation spending by federal unions.

Make DEI Union Expenses Non-Deductible
Unknown savings
VIABILITY: HIGH / MEDIUM / LOW

- Currently, federal unions are able to deduct all expenses on DEI training because they are "educational." This proposal would impose new limits, likely raising some revenue.

Increase Electric Vehicle Fees
Unknown savings
VIABILITY: HIGH / MEDIUM / LOW

- Electric vehicles do not currently contribute to the Highway Trust Fund, which is largely funded by the federal gas tax. This option would assess a new fee on electric vehicles.

Border Adjustment Tax
$1.2 trillion+ in 10-year savings
VIABILITY: HIGH / MEDIUM / LOW

- This option creates a new tax on goods where they are consumed, not produced. This shift from an origin-based tax to a destination-based tax.

H.R. 5688, Improvements to Health Savings Accounts
$10 billion in 10-year costs
VIABILITY: HIGH / MEDIUM / LOW

- H.R. 5688 allows individuals who utilize key health services such as direct primary care arrangements and worksite health clinics to use their own resources to contribute to health savings account funds. The bill also eliminates a prohibition against an individual establishing an HSA if their spouse has an existing flexible spending arrangement and allows individuals to convert their own flexible spending or health reimbursement arrangement dollars into a health savings account.

Eliminate Tax on Tips
$106 billion in 10-year costs
VIABILITY: HIGH / MEDIUM / LOW

- Tips received by employees are subject to income and payroll taxes. This option would eliminate the income tax on tips.

Eliminate Tax on Overtime
$750 billion in 10-year costs
VIABILITY: HIGH / MEDIUM / LOW

- This blanket exemption would prevent overtime earnings from being taxed. This is a Tax Foundation score.

Exempt Americans Abroad from Income Tax
$100 billion 10-year cost
VIABILITY: HIGH / MEDIUM / LOW

- Currently, the foreign earned income exclusion offers tax benefits to Americans residing overseas. Adjusted annually for inflation, the exclusion amount reached $126,500 for 2024. It is unclear whether this proposal intends to raise this limit or fully eliminate U.S. taxation on individual foreign income. This is a Tax Foundation score.

Auto Loan Interest Deduction
$61 billion in 10-year costs
VIABILITY: HIGH / MEDIUM / LOW

- This would allow Americans to deduct their auto loan interest payments from their taxes. The specifics are unclear at the moment. This is a Tax Foundation score.

Repeal IRA's Corporate Alternative Minimum Tax
$222 billion 10-year in costs

VIABILITY: HIGH / MEDIUM / LOW

- The Inflation Reduction Act (IRA) imposes a 15% corporate alternative minimum tax on adjusted financial statement income for corporations. This option would repeal the IRA's corporate AMT.

Eliminate the Death Tax
$370 billion in 10-year costs
VIABILITY: HIGH / MEDIUM / LOW

- Estates exceeding a certain value are subject to federal tax. The TCJA doubled the estate tax exclusion. The 2023 exclusion amount is $12.9 million per person ($25.8 million for married couples). This option would eliminate the federal estate tax.

Cancel Amortization of R&D Expenses
$169 billion in 10-year costs
VIABILITY: HIGH / MEDIUM / LOW

- Prior to TCJA, research and development (R&D) costs could be immediately expensed. TCJA replaced R&D expensing with amortization. This option would return to the pre-TCJA treatment of R&D.

Implement Neutral Cost Recovery for Structures
$10 billion in 10-year costs
VIABILITY: HIGH / MEDIUM / LOW

- While TCJA improved the tax treatment of short-term investments with the temporary 100 percent Bonus Depreciation provision, it did not improve the treatment of long-term investments in buildings and structures. This policy would allow businesses to index the value of deductions to inflation and a real rate of return (to address the time value of money). Experts believe this would preserve the economic benefits of full expensing for long-term structures at a fraction of the cost. Has a large cost outside of the budget window. This is a Tax Foundation score.

Lower the Corporate Rate to 15 Percent
$522 billion in 10-year costs
VIABILITY: HIGH / MEDIUM / LOW

- TCJA permanently lowered the corporate income tax rate from a globally uncompetitive 35 percent to 21 percent. This option would further lower the corporate rate to 15 percent.

Lower the Corporate Rate to 20 Percent
$73 billion in 10-year costs
VIABILITY: HIGH / MEDIUM / LOW

- TCJA permanently lowered the corporate income tax rate from a globally uncompetitive 35 percent to 21 percent. This option would further lower the corporate rate to 20 percent.

Repeal IRA's IRS Enforcement Funding
$46.6 billion in 10-year costs
VIABILITY: HIGH / MEDIUM / LOW

- Over the FY25-FY34 period, that rescission is estimated to reduce outlays by $20 billion, reduce revenues by $66.6 billion, and as result increase the deficit by $46.6 billion. This estimate is relative to the 2024 baseline.

Restructure the EITC to Reduce Improper Payments
Unknown savings
VIABILITY: HIGH / MEDIUM / LOW

- In 2023, the Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) had an estimated improper payment rate of 33.5 percent, totalling $22 billion dollars. This policy option would simplify the EITC by breaking it out into a "worker credit" and a "child credit," allowing for more accurate eligibility verifications and reducing improper payments.

Trade

Codify and Increase 301 Tariffs on China
$100 billion in 10-year savings
VIABILITY: HIGH / MEDIUM / LOW

- The current 301 tariffs bring in approximately $40 billion per year. This option would codify the 301 tariffs in addition to increasing the tariffs on products already subject to 301.

10 Percent Tariff
$1.9 trillion in 10-year savings
VIABILITY: HIGH / MEDIUM / LOW

- This option would create a 10% across the board tariff on all imports.

H.R. 7679, End China's De Minimis Abuse Act
$24 billion in 10-year savings
VIABILITY: HIGH / MEDIUM / LOW

- Legislation requiring de minimis value shipments to also pay any existing 301 tariffs would reduce the volume of de minimis shipments from China by half.

Welfare

Codify the Chained CPI-U for Poverty Programs
$5 billion in 10-year savings
VIABILITY: HIGH / MEDIUM / LOW

- Codifying the Chained CPI-U will limit the Executive Branch's ability to change the federal poverty line, which determines eligibility and funding allocations to states for federal means-tested welfare programs. Using just the CPI-U overstates inflation, contributing to a larger welfare system and a culture of government dependency.

Eliminate Social Services Block Grant
$15 billion in 10-year savings
VIABILITY: HIGH / MEDIUM / LOW

- The Social Services Block Grant (SSBG) is an annually appropriated capped entitlement to states to support a range of social service activities. However, most of these activities are funded by other federal programs, including TANF, the Community Services Block Grant, the Child Care and Development Fund, and more. Furthermore, the SSBG provides excessive state discretion over $1.7 billion annually with no accountability. Presidents Bush and Trump proposed eliminating the SSBG in their budgets and the House has proposed its elimination in budget resolutions in the 112th, 113th, 114th, and 115th Congresses. This block grant is duplicative of other programs, lacks effective oversight, and should be eliminated.

Eliminate TANF Contingency Fund
$6 billion in 10-year savings
VIABILITY: HIGH / MEDIUM / LOW

- The TANF Contingency Fund provides additional funding to states experiencing economic hardship. However, it is essentially a slush fund, providing states with excessive discretion over federal funds, and is duplicative to other federal programs. This policy option would eliminate the TANF Contingency Fund.

Improve SSI Income and Asset Verification
Unknown savings
VIABILITY: HIGH / MEDIUM / LOW

- SSI provides cash assistance to aged, blind, and disabled individuals with little or no income. Under current law, SSA is not required to verify financial accounts of SSI applicants and recipients who allege ownership of resources valued at less than $400. A recent SSA-OIG report concluded that this practice led to incorrect resource determinations, resulting in 198,960 recipients receiving $718 million in SSI payments for which they were not eligible. This policy option would lower the $400 resource-level tolerance to $0 and require SSA to validate the financial accounts of all SSI applicants and recipients, strengthening program integrity and reducing improper payments.

TANF Work Requirements
$7 million in 10-year savings
VIABILITY: HIGH / MEDIUM / LOW

- Adult TANF recipients, with some exceptions, must participate in work activities to receive benefits. Under current law, HHS has the authority to reduce or waive penalties to states that do not meet TANF work participation requirements. This policy option would take away HHS's ability to do so with the intent to incentivize work as a pathway to self-sufficiency, reducing direct spending by $7 million.

Require School Attendance for SSI Benefits
$640 million in 10-year savings
VIABILITY: HIGH / MEDIUM / LOW

- Children under 18 may qualify for SSI if they are disabled and their household has limited income and resources. This policy option would condition SSI benefits for qualified children under the age of 18 on school attendance.

Sliding Scale for SSI Benefits
$5 billion in 10-year savings
VIABILITY: HIGH / MEDIUM / LOW

- SSI, unlike other welfare programs, does not pay benefits on a sliding scale. Recognizing household economies of scale, this reform (based on a CBO budget option) converts SSI payments to a sliding scale. The sliding scale formula would be (as per the CBO budget option and proposed by the 1995 National Commission on Childhood Disability): SSI federal payment rate multiplied by the number of child recipients in the family and raised to the power of 0.7.

Deny SSI to Those with Felony Arrest Warrants
$3 billion in 10-year savings

VIABILITY: HIGH / MEDIUM / LOW

- In addition to being an important program integrity measure, this policy option would help restore the original intent of PRWORA to discontinue SSI benefits for individuals who are "the subject of an arrest warrant" compared to the previous language of "fleeing to avoid" arrest. It would also have the added benefit of helping law enforcement find criminals who have been evading the law.

Reduce TANF by 10 Percent
$15 billion in 10-year savings
VIABILITY: HIGH / MEDIUM / LOW

- The TANF block grant provides fixed funding to the 50 states, DC, and territories, for a range of benefits and services to assist low-income families with children. Current law allows states to carry over unspent TANF funds indefinitely. At the end of 2022, $9 billion TANF dollars remained unspent – over half the size of the $16.5 billion block grant. This policy option would reduce the TANF block grant by 10 percent.

ENERGY & COMMERCE COMMITTEE

Health

Reverse Executive Expansion of State-Directed Payments in Medicaid
Up to $25 billion in 10-year savings (Informal Estimate)
VIABILITY: HIGH / MEDIUM / LOW

- The Biden Administration finalized regulations effectively removing limits on the levels of state-directed payments (SDPs) in Medicaid, which are used to artificially increase federal Medicaid matching funds. This policy would impose limits on SDPs.

Medicaid FMAP Penalty for covering Illegal Aliens with State-Only Money
TBD on Savings
VIABILITY: HIGH / MEDIUM / LOW

- This option would impose a reduction in a state's FMAP if the state uses state-only funding to provide coverage to illegal aliens through the state's Medicaid program. States currently offering Medicaid coverage for illegal aliens include California and New York.

Repeal CMS Nursing Home Minimum Staffing Final Rule
Up to $22 billion in 10-year savings
VIABILITY: HIGH / MEDIUM / LOW

- This option would repeal the final rule, "Minimum Staffing Standards for Long-Term Care Facilities and Medicaid Institutional Payment Transparency Reporting." The rule was finalized in May 2024 and would impose minimum staffing standards on long-term care facilities, creating an unfunded mandate on critical health care facilities across the country, threatening provider facility closures and patient access to care.

Eliminate Prevention and Public Health Fund
$15 billion in 10-year savings
VIABILITY: HIGH / MEDIUM / LOW

- Created under Obamacare, the Prevention and Public Health Fund (PPHF) is "the nation's first mandatory funding stream dedicated to improving our nation's public health system." In reality, the PPHF has served as a slush fund for the HHS Secretary, who has full authority to spend funds in this account on any program or activity under the Public Health Service Act the Department chooses without further congressional action. There is currently authorized $1.3B for FY24-FY25, $1.8B for FY26-FY27, and $2B for FY28 and every fiscal year thereafter. This policy would repeal this fund but does not cut a specific program.

Equalize DC FMAP to What States Receive
$8 billion in 10-year savings
VIABILITY: HIGH / MEDIUM / LOW

- This policy would base the District of Columbia's federal medical assistance percentage (FMAP) on the standard formula rather than fixed at 70 percent by statute. Under the policy, the District's matching rate would fall from 70 percent to 50 percent.

Lower Medicaid Matching Rate Floor
Up to $387 billion in 10-year savings
VIABILITY: HIGH / MEDIUM / LOW

- There is currently a floor for states' federal medical assistance percentage (FMAP) set in statute at 50%. This option would lower the floor and allow all states' FMAPs to be set according to the formula. This option would primarily impact high-income states, like California and New York.

Equalize FMAP for ACA Expansion Population
$561 billion in 10-year savings
VIABILITY: HIGH / MEDIUM / LOW

- The Obamacare Medicaid expansion gives preferential treatment to able-bodied adults over children or individuals with disabilities with a set 90 percent Federal Medical Assistance Percentage (FMAP) federal reimbursement for the Obamacare adult expansion population. This policy would end Obamacare's preferential treatment for adults over children by equalizing federal reimbursement of expansion adults to the normal FMAP formula.

Establish Medicaid Work Requirements
$100 billion in 10-year savings
VIABILITY: HIGH / MEDIUM / LOW

- The policy would restore the dignity of work by implementing work requirements for able-bodied adults without dependents to qualify for Medicaid coverage, as included in the House-passed Limit, Save, Grow Act (H.R. 2811). Certain populations would be exempted, such as pregnant women, primary caregivers of dependents, individuals with disabilities or health-related barriers to employment, and full-time students.

Limit Medicaid Provider Taxes
$175 billion in 10-year savings
VIABILITY: HIGH / MEDIUM / LOW

- States increase the amount of federal Medicaid funding they receive by levying taxes on providers and then increasing their reimbursement rates. This policy would lower the Medicaid provider tax safe harbor from 6% under current law to 4% from 2026 to 2027 and 3% in 2028 and after.

Repeal Biden Administration Finalized Medicaid/CHIP ACCESS Rule
$121 billion in 10-year savings
VIABILITY: HIGH / MEDIUM / LOW

- In May 2024,the Biden Administration finalized a rule focused primarily on expanding access to Home and Community Based Services (HCBS) in both fee for service (FFS) Medicaid and in managed care plans, including by instituting worker compensation requirements.

Repeal Biden Administration Finalized Medicaid Eligibility Rule

$164 billion in 10-year savings
VIABILITY: HIGH / MEDIUM / LOW

- In September 2023 and April 2024, CMS finalized two parts of a rule that governs protocols for states verifying Medicaid and CHIP eligibility. Among other things, the proposed rule imposed a prohibition on conducting eligibility checks more frequently than once every 12 months, elimination of the requirement for in-person interviews for some populations, and minimum time allowances for enrollees to provide documentation needed.

Medicaid Per Capita Caps
Up to $900 billion in 10-year savings
VIABILITY: HIGH / MEDIUM / LOW

- Currently, states receive open-ended Federal Medicaid matching funds based on the costs of providing services to enrollees. Under Medicaid today, for every dollar a state spends on Medicaid services, it gets $1 to $3 of Federal support (richer states get $1, poorer states get $3). States are guaranteed continued federal support for actual spending, even if those costs go up or do not achieve desired outcomes. With a per capita cap, the federal government makes a limited payment to the state based on a preset formula, which does not increase based on actual costs. States exceeding the "cap" for enrollees would thus need to find other revenues to maintain spending levels or explore innovative ways to reduce excessive costs. This policy would establish a per capita cap for each of the different enrollment populations set to grow at medical inflation.

Remove American Rescue Plan Temporary FMAP Increase
$18 billion in 10-year savings
VIABILITY: HIGH / MEDIUM / LOW

- The American Rescue Plan included a provision that aimed to encourage non-expansion states to expand their Medicaid programs. In addition to the 90 percent FMAP available under Obamacare for the expansion population, states can also receive a 5 percent increase in their regular federal matching rate for 2 years after expansion takes effect. The additional incentive applies whenever a state newly expands Medicaid and does not expire. This policy rolls back this additional 5 percent FMAP incentive.

Standardize Medicaid Administrative Matching Rate
$69 billion in 10-year savings
VIABILITY: HIGH / MEDIUM / LOW

- The federal government reimburses states at a different rate for some administrative activities. This policy option would standardize the Medicaid administrative matching rates at 50 percent for all administrative categories.

Medicare Site Neutrality
Up to $146 billion in 10-year savings
VIABILITY: HIGH / MEDIUM / LOW

- Currently, Medicare and beneficiaries pay more for the *SAME* health care service furnished in hospital outpatient departments (HOPDs) than in physician offices. The budget supports Medicare site neutral payments by equalizing Medicare payments for health care services that can be safely delivered in a physician's office.

Unspecified Proposals to Address IRA Drug Pricing Policies
Unknown costs
VIABILITY: HIGH / MEDIUM / LOW

- Energy and Commerce provided no details on this policy option, solely stating that the policy would mitigate the "worst of innovation killing parts of IRA."

Unspecified Proposals to Reform CMMI
Unknown costs
VIABILITY: HIGH / MEDIUM / LOW

- Energy and Commerce provided no details on this policy option, solely stating that the policy would reform CMMI and cost money.

Unspecified Proposals to Post-Acute Care
Unknown costs
VIABILITY: HIGH / MEDIUM / LOW

- Energy and Commerce provided no details on this policy option, solely stating that the policy would "facilitate better discharges to post-acute care for patients" and cost money.

Unspecified Proposals to Medicare's Physician Payment System
Unknown costs
VIABILITY: HIGH / MEDIUM / LOW

- Energy and Commerce provided no details on this policy option, solely stating that the policy would include "reforms to Medicare's physician payment system" and either cost money or be budget neutral.

Unspecified Proposals to ACA Subsidies in Individual Market
Unknown
VIABILITY: HIGH / MEDIUM / LOW

- Energy and Commerce provided no details on this policy option, solely stating it would "lower premiums, lower out of pocket costs, direct subsidies to patients over health insurers, and counter the Democrats goal of subsidizing wealthy Americans premiums and further increasing ACA spending."

Unspecified Proposals to Change FMAPs
Unknown
VIABILITY: HIGH / MEDIUM / LOW

- Energy and Commerce provided no details on this policy option, solely stating it would "rebalance Federal Matching Rates to be more fair to states with more people with lower incomes."

Energy

Inflation Reduction Act Repeals in Titles V and VI
$17.3 billion in 10-year savings
VIABILITY: HIGH / MEDIUM / LOW

- Title V programs include ($12.69 billion):
  - Home energy performance based and whole-house rebates ($2.8 billion)
  - High efficiency electric home rebate program ($2 billion)
  - State-based home energy efficiency contractor training and grants ($120 million)
  - Assistance for latest and zero building energy code adoption ($600 million)
  - Funding for Department of Energy, Loan Program Office ($3.9 billion)
  - Advanced vehicle technology manufacturing ($1.6 billion)
  - Transmission facility financing ($14 million)
  - Interregional and offshore wind transmission planning and modeling ($73 million)
  - Department of Energy administrative funding ($80 million)
  - Federal Regulatory commission funding (($85 million)
  - 1.42
  - Grants for interstate electricity transmission lines ($337 million)

  - Advanced industrial facilities deployment program ($2.3 million)
  - Department of energy oversight ($59 million)
  - Canal improvement project ($21 million)
  - Domestic manufacturing conservation grants ($1 billion)

- Title VI Programs include ($4.64 billion):
  - Clean heavy-duty vehicles ($621 million)
  - Grants to reduce air pollution at ports ($1.8 billion)
  - Diesel emissions reductions ($20 million)
  - Funding to address air pollution ($40 million)
  - Funding to address air pollution at schools ($4 million)
  - Low emissions electricity program ($20 million)
  - EPA production declaration assistance ($44 million)
  - Methane emissions reduction grants ($698 million)
  - Climate pollution reduction grants ($2 million)
  - Low embodied carbon labeling for construction materials ($30 million)
  - Environmental and Climate Justice Block Grant ($1.4 billion)

H.R. 2811 Energy Leasing and Permitting Provisions
$7.5 billion in 10-year savings
VIABILITY: HIGH / MEDIUM / LOW

- Division D, Title II and III of H.R. 2811, Limit, Save, Grow Act includes all of H.R. 2 , The Lower Energy Costs Act and Transparency, Accountability, Permitting, and Production of American Resources Act or the TAPP American Resources Act. CBO's score of the LSG notes that these provisions reduce revenues by $6.4 billion. The HBC Energy team does not have any further information or detail on this provision.

Repeal EPA Tailpipe Emissions Rule and Department of Transportation CAFE Standards Rule
$111.3 billion in 10-year savings
VIABILITY: HIGH / MEDIUM / LOW

- The EPA Tailpipe and DOT CAFE Standard rules considerably increase the usages of the IRA's EV tax credits. It is likely that these rules will be among the first repealed by Trump executive action.

Sell Oil from the Strategic Petroleum Reserve
Can be Dialed Based on Need
VIABILITY: HIGH / MEDIUM / LOW

- SPR sales can be dialed based on need.

Other

Electromagnetic Spectrum Auction
$70 billion in 10-year savings
VIABILITY: HIGH / MEDIUM / LOW

- FCC auctioning certification and permitting for electromagnetic spectrum to provide wireless and broadcast services throughout the country.

AGRICULTURE COMMITTEE

Welfare

Reform 2021 Revaluation of the Thrifty Food Plan (TFP)
Up to $274 billion in 10-year savings
VIABILITY: HIGH / MEDIUM / LOW

- In August 2021, President Biden expanded the TFP without cost constraints, leading to a 23 percent increase in SNAP benefits at the cost of $300 billion over ten years. At the request of congressional lawmakers, GAO conducted a legal review of Biden's reevaluated TFP and found that USDA's actions violated the 1996 Congressional Review Act, which requires government agencies to submit significant policy updates to Congress. This policy option could implement a range of reforms to the TFP, from limiting changes in the cost to the rate of inflation (saving $36 billion over ten years) to completely repealing the Biden Administration's TFP expansion (saving $274 billion over ten years).

SNAP Work Requirements
$5 billion in 10-year savings
VIABILITY: HIGH / MEDIUM / LOW

- Able-bodied adults without dependents (ABAWDs) age 18 – 49 are supposed to meet work requirements to be eligible for SNAP benefits. The FRA temporarily increased the age limit for exemption from work requirements to 54 and created various exemptions for certain populations from work requirements. This policy implements work requirements from LSG to raise the age limit for exemption to

56 and restricts the ability for states to carry forward work requirement exemptions to future years.

End Broad-Based Categorical Eligibility
$10 billion in 10-year savings
VIABILITY: HIGH / MEDIUM / LOW

- Current law allows states to provide SNAP benefits to individuals who would otherwise be ineligible through broad-based categorical eligibility (BBCE), which allows individuals who receive welfare assistance from programs such as TANF to enroll in SNAP automatically. Because some TANF services are available to households with incomes higher than those that are eligible for SNAP, states can allow individuals to enroll in SNAP without meeting federal eligibility criteria for assets, income, or both. Ending BBCE would improve program integrity within SNAP and protect the program for the truly needy.

End SNAP-LIHEAP Linkage ("Heat and Eat")
$7 billion in 10-year savings
VIABILITY: HIGH / MEDIUM / LOW

- The amount of SNAP benefits a household receives is based on its countable income (income minus certain deductions). The "heat and eat" loophole allows states to provide minimal Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP) benefits to SNAP recipients to make them eligible for larger countable income deductions, triggering higher SNAP benefits. Eliminating this loophole would encourage fiscal responsibility by closing misaligned incentives that game the system, emphasizing that government benefits should be for those who need them the most and simplifying program administration.

Cap SNAP Maximum Benefit
$2 billion in 10-year savings
VIABILITY: HIGH / MEDIUM / LOW

- SNAP benefit amounts are tied to the cost of USDA's Thrifty Food Plan and determined by household size. Currently, the average monthly SNAP benefit increases for each additional household member. This policy option would cap the maximum household SNAP benefit equal to a family of six.

Repeal Provision Requiring USDA to Disregard Improper Payments Below $56
$70 million in 10-year savings
VIABILITY: HIGH / MEDIUM / LOW

- Under current law, USDA is required to tolerate and disregard improper payments below $56 when calculating payment error rates, contributing to a distorted portrayal of SNAP's improper payments. This policy option would eliminate this "tolerance threshold" to provide a more comprehensive understanding of fraud, waste, and abuse within SNAP.

Expand the National Accuracy Clearinghouse
$658+ million in 10-year savings
VIABILITY: HIGH / MEDIUM / LOW

- This policy option would expand the use of the SNAP National Accuracy Clearinghouse (NAC), which is designed to prevent SNAP recipients from receiving benefits in multiple states.

Prohibit Retail Food Store Owners from Redeeming Benefits at Their Own Stores and Disqualify Retailers Convicted of SNAP Benefit Trafficking
$5 million in 10-year costs
VIABILITY: HIGH / MEDIUM / LOW

- One common type of fraud within SNAP involves owners of stores redeeming their own benefits for ineligible items or cash. This policy option would combat this fraud by prohibiting store owners from redeeming SNAP benefits at their own stores and disqualifying retailers convicted of SNAP benefit trafficking.

Require States to Suspend SNAP Account After 60 Days of Purchases Made Exclusively Out of State
$1 million in 10-year costs
VIABILITY: HIGH / MEDIUM / LOW

- While SNAP is federally-funded, states are responsible for providing SNAP benefits to their residents. Prolonged out-of-state SNAP activity may indicate a recipient has moved, and therefore should be receiving SNAP benefits from another state, or may be a sign of potential fraud. This policy option would suspend SNAP accounts of recipients who make exclusively out-of-state transactions for 60 days to ensure the integrity of state SNAP programs and flag potential fraud.

EDUCATION AND WORKFORCE COMMITTEE

Higher Education

Repeal Biden's "SAVE" plan, streamline income-driven repayment plans
$127.3 billion in 10-year savings
VIABILITY: HIGH / MEDIUM / LOW

- Under this option, the Department of Education (ED) would offer borrowers two repayment plans for loans originated after June 30, 2024: the currently available 10-year repayment plan and a new income-driven repayment (IDR) plan.
- This option would eliminate all other plans, including the Saving on a Valuable Education (SAVE) Plan, which is the IDR plan that was created administratively in 2023.

Limit the ED's regulatory authority
$30 billion in 10-year savings
VIABILITY: HIGH / MEDIUM / LOW

- This option would limit the authority of the ED to issue regulations that would increase the cost of federal student loans or that would have economically significant effects (have an annual effect on the economy of $100 million or more or that would adversely affect the economy in a material way).

Establish risk-sharing requirements for federal student loans, PROMISE grants
$18.1 billion 10-year savings
VIABILITY: HIGH / MEDIUM / LOW

- Under this policy option, postsecondary institutions would be required to make annual payments, called risk-sharing payments, in order to participate in the federal student loan program.
- Those payments would be the main source of funding for the Promoting Real Opportunities to Maximize Investments and Savings in Education (PROMISE) grants, which would be made to eligible postsecondary education institutions to help improve affordability and promote success for students.

Reform Gainful Employment
TBD 10-year savings
VIABILITY: HIGH / MEDIUM / LOW

- This policy option would establish minimum levels of performance (i.e. expanding Gainful Employment) for programs to participate in Title IV federal student aid programs.

Repeal Biden closed school discharge regulations
$4.9 billion in 10-year savings
VIABILITY: HIGH / MEDIUM / LOW

- This option would repeal a Biden administration rule that established a standard process for discharging loans made to borrowers who attended schools that closed, thus increasing the likelihood of loan discharge for those borrowers.

Repeal Biden borrower defense to repayment discharge regulations
$9.7 billion in 10-year savings
VIABILITY: HIGH / MEDIUM / LOW

- This option would partially repeal a Biden administration rule that made it easier for a borrower to discharge loans as a result of a school's misconduct, including, for example, misrepresentation of student outcomes.

Repeal 90/10 rule
$1.6 billion in 10-year costs
VIABILITY: HIGH / MEDIUM / LOW

- This option would repeal the requirement that for-profit institutions receive no more than 90 percent of their revenue from federal financial aid, including veterans' education benefits.

Reform Public Service Loan Forgiveness (PSLF)
TBD 10-year savings
VIABILITY: HIGH / MEDIUM / LOW

- This option would allow the Committee on Education and the Workforce to make much-needed reforms to the PSLF, including limiting eligibility for the program.

Sunset Grad and Parent Plus loans
TBD 10-year savings
VIABILITY: HIGH / MEDIUM / LOW

- This option would eliminate parent PLUS loans, which are offered to parents of dependent undergraduate students, and grad PLUS loans, which are offered to graduate students and students enrolled in professional programs.
- This option would generally eliminate such loans to new borrowers beginning on July 1, 2025, and would eliminate the program altogether by 2028.

Establish new annual and aggregate loan limits for unsubsidized undergraduate and graduate loans
TBD 10-year savings
VIABILITY: HIGH / MEDIUM / LOW

- Accompanying the above option, beginning on July 1, 2025, this option would amend loan limits for unsubsidized graduate and undergraduate loans.
- In total, CBO estimates this and the former option would reduce direct spending by $18.7 billion.

Amend the need analysis formula used to calculate federal student aid eligibility
TBD 10-year savings
VIABILITY: HIGH / MEDIUM / LOW

- This option would amend the need analysis formula to calculate federal student aid eligibility using the median cost of attendance of similar degree programs nationally instead of the cost of attendance of a student's individual program.

End in-school interest subsidy
TBD 10-year savings
VIABILITY: HIGH / MEDIUM / LOW

- Currently, the government pays the interest that accrues on a student loan while the borrower is still enrolled in school full-time, essentially meaning the student does not have to pay interest on their loan while actively studying. This policy option would eliminate this arrangement.

Allow borrowers to rehabilitate their loans a second time
$138 million in 10-year costs
VIABILITY: HIGH / MEDIUM / LOW

- This option would allow borrowers who default on their loans to be eligible for a second rehabilitation loan, which allows borrowers to exit default by making nine one-time payments.
- Under current law, borrowers can rehabilitate their loans just once.

Eliminate interest capitalization
$3.8 billion in 10-year costs
VIABILITY: HIGH / MEDIUM / LOW

- Interest capitalization is when unpaid interest is added to the principal balance of a federal student loan. This good governance option would eliminate interest capitalization.

Reform Pell Grants
TBD 10-year savings
VIABILITY: HIGH / MEDIUM / LOW

- This option would allow the Committee on Education and the Workforce to make reforms to the Pell program, such as capping grants at the median cost of attendance and/or expanding Pell grant eligibility to short-term credential programs.

Health

Ban Telehealth and Other Facility Fees
$2.3 billion in 10-year savings
VIABILITY: HIGH / MEDIUM / LOW

- As hospitals expand ownership of outpatient and physician office settings, consumers are seeing an uptick in fees for more than just the care provided to them. These "facility fees" are increasingly a driver of healthcare costs in America, and are leading to consumers being charged as though they received treatment in a hospital even if they never entered one. This proposal would prohibit hospitals from billing unwarranted facility fees for telehealth services and for certain other outpatient services.

Make It a Prohibited Transaction for Employer-Sponsored Health Plans to Pay for 340B Drugs Above the 340B Discounted Price
Unknown
VIABILITY: HIGH / MEDIUM / LOW

- 340B covered entities routinely charge commercial insurers full price for 340B discounted drugs. This policy would make it a prohibited transaction under ERISA for an employer-sponsored insurance plan to pay full price for a 340B discounted drug. Such a policy would require full transparency of 340B discounts.

Increase Penalties for Transparency Noncompliance
Unknown
VIABILITY: HIGH / MEDIUM / LOW

- Penalties under the Lower Costs, More Transparency Act for noncompliance are dialable. Noncompliance penalties could be increased in order to generate increased budgetary savings, assuming the underlying transparency penalties are enacted into law.

Clarifying and Bolstering ERISA Preemption
Unknown/Savings Presumed
VIABILITY: HIGH / MEDIUM / LOW

- The purpose of ERISA is to provide a uniform regulatory framework over employee benefit plans. However, the scope of ERISA preemption has been challenged numerous times in federal court. Strengthening the ERISA preemption could increase revenue by decreasing compliance costs for employer sponsored health insurance plans.

H.R. 2868 - Association Health Plans Act
$579 million in 10-year costs
VIABILITY: HIGH / MEDIUM / LOW

- Favorably reported by E&W June 6, 2023 24 - 18. Passed the House on June 21, 2023 as part of the CHOICE Arrangement Act (H.R. 3799) 220 - 209. This bill provides statutory authority for the treatment of association health plans (AHPs) as single, large employer health plans for purposes of the Employee Retirement Income Security Act (ERISA).

H.R. 2813 - Self-Insurance Protection Act
No budgetary effects
VIABILITY: HIGH / MEDIUM / LOW

- Favorably reported by E&W June 6, 2023 23 - 18. Passed the House on June 21, 2023 as part of the CHOICE Arrangement Act (H.R. 3799) 220 - 209. This bill specifies that stop-loss coverage is not health insurance coverage for purposes of regulation under the Employee Retirement Income Security Act of 1974. The bill also preempts state laws that prevent employers from obtaining stop-loss coverage.

H.R. 824 - Telehealth Benefit Expansion for Workers Act of 2023
Unknown
VIABILITY: HIGH / MEDIUM / LOW

- Favorably Reported by E&W July 19, 2023, 29 - 20. This bill allows employers to offer stand-alone telehealth benefits to all employees. This includes employees who are eligible for enrollment in their employer's group health plan.

Expanding Direct Contracts and Value-Based Care within Employer-Sponsored Health Insurance
Unknown
VIABILITY: HIGH / MEDIUM / LOW

- This would include legislation to expand the use of direct contracting and innovative, value-based care models among employer-sponsored insurance plans.

Telehealth-Only COBRA Coverage Option
Unknown
VIABILITY: HIGH / MEDIUM / LOW

- The intent would be to provide both COBRA-enrollees and employers tasked with offering COBRA continuation coverage to offer a telehealth-only option, within the existing employer's health plan.

Specialty Drug Coverage Under ERISA
Unknown
VIABILITY: HIGH / MEDIUM / LOW

- The intent would be to bolster employer-sponsored insurance coverage of high cost specialty drugs, either through value-based arrangements, reinsurance models, or expanded risk pools through association health plans.

Other

Change Community Eligibility Provision (CEP) to 60 Percent
$3 billion 10-year savings
VIABILITY: HIGH / MEDIUM / LOW

- The Community Eligibility Provision (CEP) allows the nation's highest-poverty schools and districts to serve breakfast and lunch at no cost to all enrolled students without collecting household applications. Instead, schools that adopt CEP are reimbursed using a formula based on participation in other specific means-tested programs, such as SNAP and TANF. Currently, schools can qualify if 40 percent of students receive these programs. This proposal would lift that to 60 percent.

Require Income Verification for School Breakfast Program (SBP) and National School Lunch Program (NSLP)
$9 billion in 10-year savings
VIABILITY: HIGH / MEDIUM / LOW

- This option would require all students who apply and are approved for free and reduced price meals to submit income verification documentation. This policy option would increase program integrity, ensuring those who receive benefits are in fact eligible, and would preserve the fiscal sustainability of the program for future generations.

FINANCIAL SERVICES COMMITTEE

Financial Regulators

Eliminate the Securities and Exchange Commission's (SEC) transfer abilities
TBD 10-year savings
VIABILITY: HIGH / MEDIUM / LOW

- The Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC) currently has the ability to carry-over unspent funds into the next Fiscal Year. This ability is eliminated under this policy option.

Eliminate SEC Reserve Fund
$475 million in 10-year savings
VIABILITY: HIGH / MEDIUM / LOW

- The SEC's so-called "Reserve Fund" is simply a slush fund created by Dodd-Frank, allowing regulators to spend without oversight by Congress.
- This policy option would eliminate this fund,—as was requested by President Trump.

Eliminate mandatory funding for Consumer Financial Protection Bureau
$9 billion in 10-year savings
VIABILITY: HIGH / MEDIUM / LOW

- The Consumer Financial Protection Bureau (CFPB) is a mandatory program that is not subject to Congress' oversight through appropriations. This policy option would subject the CFPB to the annual appropriations process.
- **Savings could depend on the appropriations process.*

Eliminate mandatory funding for financial regulators
$47 billion in 10-year savings
VIABILITY: HIGH / MEDIUM / LOW

- With the exception of the Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC) and Commodity Futures Trading Commission (CFTC), presently all federal financial regulators are mandatory programs and not subject to Congress' oversight through appropriations. This policy option would revise the funding structure for the Office of Comptroller of the Currency, National Credit Administration, Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation, Consumer Financial Protection Bureau, and Office of Financial Research so that industry assessments are re-routed directly to the Treasury, then Congress appropriates one year of funding.
- **Savings could depend on the appropriations process.*

Eliminate Office of Financial Research
$946 million in 10-year savings
VIABILITY: HIGH / MEDIUM / LOW

- This policy option would eliminate the Office of Financial Research (OFR). The Dodd-Frank Act grants the OFR broad powers to compel financial companies to produce sensitive, non-public information. While the Dodd-Frank Act describes the OFR as an "independent agency," OFR reports to the Secretary of the Treasury who serves in the President's cabinet and is arguably one of the most political financial regulators. Additionally, OFR funding is outside congressional appropriations and oversight.

Other

Repeal Orderly Liquidation Authority
$22 billion in 10-year savings
VIABILITY: HIGH / MEDIUM / LOW

- Through the Orderly Liquidation Fund (OLF), the Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation (FDIC) now has the authority to access taxpayer dollars in order to bail out the creditors of large, "systemically significant" financial institutions. This increases moral hazard on Wall Street by explicitly guaranteeing future bailouts and is, thus, eliminated under this policy option.

Reduce Fed Dividend payment to big banks
$3 billion in 10-year savings
VIABILITY: HIGH / MEDIUM / LOW

- When a Federal Reserve bank accumulates a surplus fund, under the provisions of Section 7 of the Federal Reserve Act, it is required to pay out of such fund to its stockholding member banks dividends for a year in which the current earnings of the Federal reserve bank are insufficient for this purpose. This policy option would reduce these dividend payments to big banks (presumably directing savings to the Treasury).

Rescind remaining unobligated HAMP-to-HHF funds transferred in Omnibus
Unknown 10-year savings
VIABILITY: HIGH / MEDIUM / LOW

- The savings from ending the Home Affordable Modification Program (HAMP; $2 billion) was transferred to the account of the Hardest Hit Fund (HHF) under Division O, Sec. 709 of the Omnibus. This policy option would rescind these funds.

Increase and extend the G-Fees charged to pay for 2011 Payroll Tax Bill
$14 billion in 10-year savings
VIABILITY: HIGH / MEDIUM / LOW

- Government sponsored enterprise (GSE) guarantee fees are charged by Freddie Mac and Fannie Mae to lenders for bundling, selling, and guaranteeing the payment of principal and interest on their Mortgage Backed Securities (MBS). G-Fees help GSEs manage their credit risk by covering projected credit losses from borrower defaults over the life of the loans, administrative costs, and a return on capital. This policy option would thus increase and extend G-Fees.
- Payroll tax could be a problem; extension CRFB option ($5 billion).

Reform Fannie Mae & Freddie Mac
At least $5 billion in 10-year savings
VIABILITY: HIGH / MEDIUM / LOW

- Nearly 16 years after the 2008 financial crisis, Freddie Mac and Fannie Mae remain under government conservatorship, with taxpayers standing behind their obligations. This policy option would reform these two government-sponsored enterprises with the goal of increasing their efficacy and accountability.

Move Fed employees to basic government pay and benefits scale
$1 billion in 10-year savings
VIABILITY: HIGH / MEDIUM / LOW

- Currently, as an independent agency, the Fed has their own pay and benefit arrangements. This policy option would require the Fed to follow the G.S. payscale.

Eliminate all NFIP subsidies
$11 billion in 10-year savings
VIABILITY: HIGH / MEDIUM / LOW

- Currently National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP) subsidies are not based on need and fail to adequately assess risk. This policy option would eliminate all NFIP subsidies and divert revenue from the program to the Treasury.

SCIENCE, SPACE, and TECHNOLOGY COMMITTEE

Inflation Reduction Act

Repeal IRA spending under jurisdiction
Up to $232 million in 10-year savings
VIABILITY: HIGH / MEDIUM / LOW

- This policy would repeal IRA Title IV measures under the jurisdiction of the Science, Space, and Technology committee.
- Title IV measures include:
  - Alternative Fuel and Low-Emission Aviation Technology Program ($123 million)
  - Oceanic and Atmospheric Research and Forecasting for Weather and Climate Budget Authority ($47 million)
  - Computing Capacity and Research for Weather, Oceans, and Climate ($4 million)
  - Acquisition of Hurricane Forecasting Aircraft ($22 million)

NATURAL RESOURCES COMMITTEE

Leasing

Restore noncompetitive leasing
$160 million in 10-year savings
VIABILITY: HIGH / MEDIUM / LOW

- This policy restores noncompetitive leasing for oil and gas, streamlining the process and enhancing federal revenue through increased energy development.

Offshore Oil and Natural Gas Leasing
$4.2 billion in 10-year savings
VIABILITY: HIGH / MEDIUM / LOW

- Expanding offshore leasing opportunities would boost federal revenue by opening new areas for oil and gas exploration, contributing significantly to savings over the next decade.

Reopen ANWR and require new lease sales
$45 million in 10-year savings
VIABILITY: HIGH / MEDIUM / LOW

- The Alaska's Right to Produce Act (H.R. 6285) would reopen lease sales in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge (ANWR), generating revenue from oil and gas extraction, with additional contributions from offshore leasing.

Onshore Oil and Gas Leasing
$500 million in 10-year savings
VIABILITY: HIGH / MEDIUM / LOW

- Expanding onshore leasing for oil and gas would generate substantial federal savings, with estimates currently ranging from $500 million to potentially higher based on updated analyses.

Increased Geothermal Leasing
$20 million in 10-year savings
VIABILITY: HIGH / MEDIUM / LOW

- This policy would boost leasing for geothermal energy development, contributing additional revenue while promoting cleaner energy alternatives.

Increased Coal Leasing
Savings TBD
VIABILITY: HIGH / MEDIUM / LOW

- Expands coal leasing; scores will likely be in the single digit millions.

H.R.7370, Permit Processing Reform for Geothermal

Savings TBD
VIABILITY: HIGH / MEDIUM / LOW

- Streamlined the permit process for geothermal energy

IRA Funds

Rescind IRA Funds
$1.943 billion in 10-year savings
VIABILITY: HIGH / MEDIUM / LOW

- Title IV savings include:
  - Investing in Coastal Communities and Climate Resilience *($1.3 billion)*
- Title V savings include:
  - National Parks and Public Lands Conservation and Resilience *($132 million)*
  - US Geological Survey 3D Evaluation Program *($7 million)*
  - Bureau of Reclamation Domestic Water Supply Projects *($487 million)*
  - Department of Interior Oversight *($3 million)*
  - National Parks Service Employees *($267 million)*
- Title VI savings:
  - Endangered Species Act Recovery Plans *($50 million)*
  - Funding for USFWS to Address Weather Events *($40 million)*
- Title VIII savings
  - Tribal Climate Resilience *($195 million)*
  - Native Hawaiian Climate Resilience *($1 million)*
  - Tribal Electrification Program *($115 million)*
  - Emergency Drought Relief for Tribes *($11 million)*

Rescind Presidio money from IRA
Up to $200 million in 10-year savings
VIABILITY: HIGH / MEDIUM / LOW

- U.S. Department of the Interior Fish and Wildlife and Parks Assistant Secretary Shannon Estenoz directed the transfer of $200 million in funding provided in the Inflation Reduction Act (IRA) to address deferred maintenance to the Presidio Trust, despite the fact that this was not consistent with standard agency practices for selecting priority deferred maintenance projects. This policy would revoke this $200 million transfer.

Other

Timber Sales
$1-2 billion in 10-year savings
VIABILITY: HIGH / MEDIUM / LOW

- Increase Timber Sales. Can be dialed up or down.

Sell Federal Land
Savings TBD
VIABILITY: HIGH / MEDIUM / LOW

- Increases sale of federal land

H.R. 4374, Chaco Canyon
$17 million in 10-year savings
VIABILITY: HIGH / MEDIUM / LOW

- End the restriction on oil and gas leases in Chaco Canyon

OVERSIGHT AND GOVERNMENT REFORM COMMITTEE

Federal Workforce

Raise FERS Contribution Rate to 4.4 Percent
$44 billion in 10-year savings
VIABILITY: HIGH / MEDIUM / LOW

- In the Federal Employees Retirement System (FERS), employee contribution rates are tiered by year hired: 0.8 percent if hired in 2012 and earlier, 3.1 percent if hired in 2013, and 4.4 percent if hired in 2014 and after. This option would raise the contribution rate across-the-board to 4.4 percent.

Eliminate FERS Supplemental Retirement Payments
$5 - $13 billion in 10-year savings
VIABILITY: HIGH / MEDIUM / LOW

- This option would eliminate the supplement to FERS employees who retire before they are eligible for Social Security. Under current law, if an employee retires before 62, a supplemental FERS payment is made to bridge the employee

until they are eligible for Social Security. This change will align federal retirement policies more closely with the private sector and encourage longer service.

Base FERS Retiree Benefit on High-5 Instead of High-3 Salary
$4 billion in 10-year savings
VIABILITY: HIGH / MEDIUM / LOW

- This policy option would change the FERS retirement formula to use the average of employees' earnings over the five consecutive highest earning years as opposed to the currently used calculation of the highest three consecutive years. This shift, which would reflect employees' career earnings more accurately and be more in line with private sector plans, would reduce FERS spending to ensure the system's long-term sustainability.

Enact Federal Employee Health Benefits Protection Act (H.R. 7868)
$2.1 billion in 10-year savings
VIABILITY: HIGH / MEDIUM / LOW

- Under this Act, OPM must conduct a comprehensive audit of employee family members currently enrolled in the FEHB program and disenroll or remove from enrollment any ineligible individual found to be receiving FEHB benefits. This reform would reduce improper payments, saving $2.1 billion over 10 years.

Convert New Federal Workers to At-Will Employment Unless They Accept Higher FERS Contribution
Unknown
VIABILITY: HIGH / MEDIUM / LOW

- This option would require future federal employees to elect between two classification systems: the current system with merit-based civil service protections or a new at-will classification. If an employee elects to be classified as an at-will classification, they will maintain a lower FERS annuity contribution rate (4.4 percent or lower). However, for employees that elect to be classified under the current merit-based civil service system, their annuity employee contribution would be increased to a higher rate. Since a significant percentage of future civil service employees would elect to take advantage of the job protections of the current merit-based civil service system, this reform should yield mandatory savings due to the reduction in the federal agency's FERS annuity contribution share.

Eliminate Official Time Unless Unions Compensate the Federal Government
Unknown savings
VIABILITY: HIGH / MEDIUM / LOW

- This reform would charge federal labor organizations for their use of agency resources as well as any official time.

Charge a Fee for Federal Employee MSPB Appeals
Unknown savings
VIABILITY: HIGH / MEDIUM / LOW

- Federal employees subject to adverse action by their agency, including dismissal, can appeal their case to the Merit Systems Protection Board (MSPB). In the majority of cases, MSPB upholds the ruling of the agency. This policy option would charge a fee for federal employee MSPB appeals, raising revenue while reducing the cost of frivolous MSPB filings.

Adjustment to Limit of Federal Employee Buy-Outs
Unknown savings
VIABILITY: HIGH / MEDIUM / LOW

- This policy option would increase the federal employee buy-out threshold from the existing $25,000 maximum allowance for civilian employees to $40,000 (in parity with DOD's current authority) and would establish a $2 billion Voluntary Separation Incentive Payment Fund within the U.S. Treasury to fund these buy-outs. It would also lower the 20-year Voluntary Early Retirement (VER) option to 15 years of service.

Move FEHB from a Premium-share Model to a Voucher Model
$16-18 billion in 10-year savings
VIABILITY: HIGH / MEDIUM / LOW

- The FEHB program provides the federal workforce and annuitants (and their dependents and survivors) with health insurance coverage. The FEHB program also covers postal workers but beginning in 2025, those benefits will be provided through the Postal Service Health Benefits (PSHB) program. Under this option, the FEHB and PSHB programs would be reformed by replacing the current premium-sharing structure with a voucher, which would not be subject to income and payroll taxes. CBO classifies the federal share of premiums for most federal employees as discretionary but federal spending on premiums for annuitants and postal workers is classified as mandatory.

Other

Government Efficiency Commission
Unknown savings
VIABILITY: HIGH / MEDIUM / LOW

- This option creates a Government Efficiency Commission in support of the Administration's efforts.

Federal Building Occupancy At Minimum of 80 Percent
Unknown savings
VIABILITY: HIGH / MEDIUM / LOW

- This policy option requires agencies to meet a minimum 80 percent average occupancy in their buildings and leased spaces in the DC-VA-MD-WV area and to dispose of any surplus properties.

Renewing Efficiency in Government by Budgeting (REG Budgeting) Act
Unknown savings
VIABILITY: HIGH / MEDIUM / LOW

- This policy option requires federal regulatory agencies to constrain unfunded new costs imposed by federal regulators and requires OMB to set an annual, regulatory budget that restricts the amount of new, unfunded regulatory costs agencies can impose each year.

Full Responsibility and Expedited Enforcement (FREE) Act
Unknown savings
VIABILITY: HIGH / MEDIUM / LOW

- The federal permitting process is often burdensome, inconsistent, and costly. This option streamlines the federal permitting process by expanding the use of "permits-by-rule" (PBR) rather than case-by-case application for and review of individual permit applications, creating a more efficient and consistent process.

JUDICIARY COMMITTEE

The Secure the Border Act
$6.1 billion in 10-year costs
VIABILITY: HIGH / MEDIUM / LOW

- Our signature border security package this Congress. CBO reports that it will decrease direct spending by approximately $21 billion over the window, decrease revenues by approximately $27.1 billion over the window, and decrease discretionary spending by approximately $32 billion over the window.

Immigration Fees
$5-20 billion in 10-year savings
VIABILITY: HIGH / MEDIUM / LOW

- Judiciary is open to dialing up any and all immigration related fees in their jurisdiction to hit a desired reconciliation target.

Extend and Increase Customs User Fees
$25 billion in 10-year savings
VIABILITY: HIGH / MEDIUM / LOW

- The Customs User Fees are collected by CBP for inspecting cargo and people. This option would extend the fees through the 10-year window and increase them by 25 percent.

Eliminate Diversity Visa Program
$3.2 billion in 10-year savings
VIABILITY: HIGH / MEDIUM / LOW

- The Diversity Immigrant Visa program, provides up to 55,000 immigrant visas annually. It aims to attract applicants from countries with otherwise low immigration rates to the U.S. Unlike most visa programs, it requires no job offer or familial tie for entry. This option would eliminate the program.

Reinstate Public Charge Rule
$15 billion in 10-year savings
VIABILITY: HIGH / MEDIUM / LOW

- The public charge rule reduces the number of people eligible for green cards or visas by redefining what made them dependent on government benefits. This policy was expanded under the Trump Administration with two proposed rules in 2019. Neither are in effect. This policy would prevent people who are unable to take care of themselves from benefiting from long-term care at the government's expense.

Reclaim Certain Funding
No score; possible deficit reduction
VIABILITY: HIGH / MEDIUM / LOW

- Leadership requested the reclamation of funding for certain offices and programs included in the list below. We are not sure how much funding remains in these accounts.
  - US Refugee Admissions Program (USRAP)
  - United Nations Refugee Agency (UNHCR)
  - International Organization for Migration (IOM)
  - Safe Mobility
  - Funding for the Executive Office for Immigration Review
  - EOIR Language Access Plan
  - Stab-Serv and Case Management Pilot Program
  - Welcome Corps
  - Housing Programs for illegal migrants (HUD)
  - Non-Government Organizations participating in aiding illegal migration

Visa Overstay Fee
No score; possible deficit reduction
VIABILITY: HIGH / MEDIUM / LOW

- This option would increase the fee on visa overstays and make such fees non-waivable.

Ongoing Immigration Fees
No score; possible deficit reduction
VIABILITY: HIGH / MEDIUM / LOW

- This suite of options would impose ongoing fees (monthly) for the duration of parole, ongoing fee for asylee until case is adjudicated, ongoing work authorization fees (monthly) for asylees and parolees, and additional fee on work applications.

Increased Penalties for Employing Illegal Immigrants
No score; possible deficit reduction
VIABILITY: HIGH / MEDIUM / LOW

- Leadership did not provide any further detail on this option.

Rescind DOJ Asset Forfeiture Account
$1 billion in 10-year savings

VIABILITY: HIGH / MEDIUM / LOW

- This was private option on the FY25 budget resolution

Bonus to Law Enforcement Agencies that honor ICE Detainers
No score; deficit increase
VIABILITY: HIGH / MEDIUM / LOW

- Program not detailed by leadership. Would likely need to be a mandatory account with a grant program to pass Byrd Rule.

REINS Act
No budgetary effects
VIABILITY: HIGH / MEDIUM / LOW

- Restrains the administrative state by amending the Congressional Review Act (CRA) of 1996, by requiring the Legislative Branch's approval on major rules and regulations proposed by the Executive Branch.

HOMELAND SECURITY COMMITTEE

Border and Immigration

Border wall funding appropriation
No score yet; deficit increase
VIABILITY: HIGH / MEDIUM / LOW

- The Homeland Committee would like funds to build border barriers, including the "Trump Wall" (a 33 ft high concrete barrier) along 700+ miles of the border.
- The Homeland Committee estimates $18 billion for 734 miles of new wall, $7.8 billion to replace legacy fencing/vehicle barriers, and another $10 billion for additional secondary barriers.
- Leadership stated the need for Rio Grande River buoys but no specifics were provided.

State Reimbursement for Border Security Initiatives
No score yet ($11-13 billion); deficit increase
VIABILITY: HIGH / MEDIUM / LOW

- This option would focus on reimbursing Texas for Operation Lone Star and Stonegarden. The provision would need to be written broadly so as to "affect multiple entities" or it will trigger Byrd Rule.

Border Security Personnel Investments
No score yet; deficit increase
VIABILITY: HIGH / MEDIUM / LOW

- Homeland would like to surge funding to hire 3,000 additional Border Patrol Agents, 5,000 more Office of Field Operations Agents (CBP), and 200 more Air and Marine Operations Agents. The estimate the cost of this surge to be $12.6 billion over 10 years.
- Homeland is also requesting $100 million for retention bonuses.

Technology Improvements at the Border
No score yet; deficit increase
VIABILITY: HIGH / MEDIUM / LOW

- Homeland estimates around $2 billion is necessary to update technology at and between ports of entry.

Destruction of Invasive Plant Species along the Southwest Border
No score yet; deficit increase
VIABILITY: HIGH / MEDIUM / LOW

- Carrizo cane and salt cedar hinder detection of illicit activity along the Rio Grande. Homeland estimates a cost of $250 million.

Extend TSA Security Passenger Fees
Up to $25 billion in 10-year savings
VIABILITY: HIGH / MEDIUM / LOW

Option 1: Extend the deficit reduction portion through 2034 at the level currently specified for 2027

- On a preliminary basis, enacting option 1 would reduce direct spending by about $11.8 billion over the 2025-2034 period.

Option 2: (a) Extend the deficit reduction portion through 2034 at the level currently specified for 2027 and (b) increase the passenger security fee by 25 percent, effective upon enactment, and deposit those amounts in Treasury as receipts

- On a preliminary basis, enacting option 2 would reduce direct spending by about $24.7 billion over the 2025-2034 period.

TRANSPORTATION AND INFRASTRUCTURE COMMITTEE

Modify Eligibility to Certain IIJA Programs
Unknown costs or savings
VIABILITY: HIGH / MEDIUM / LOW

- Given that a rescission of IIJA advance appropriation funds would retain its emergency designation and therefore be unable to offset new spending in a reconciliation bill, this proposal would impose 'restrictions' or 'limitations' on certain IIJA advanced appropriations of duplicative programs that are eligible for several competitive grant programs (bike paths, EV charging stations, Amtrak, etc.) which can crowd out more traditional infrastructure projects. A restriction or limitation would be scored with regular outlay savings if it is significant enough to create a budgetary effect, according to CBO.

Modify Treatment of Overflight Fees
$3 billion in 10-year savings
VIABILITY: HIGH / MEDIUM / LOW

- This proposal would repeal mandatory subsidies/overflight fees for the Essential Air Service (EAS) program, subjecting the funding to future appropriations.

Sell Federal Buildings
Unknown costs
VIABILITY: HIGH / MEDIUM / LOW

- This proposal is designed to realize savings through consolidations and sales of Federal real estate by directing the General Services Administration to identify vacant Federal real estate and require GSA to move agencies out of underutilized space into smaller, lower cost options and sell the vacated buildings. *Savings would be booked as a mandatory saver, but depend heavily on what/how specific properties would be sold, how clear incentives are for agencies to sell properties, and how properties are exempt from federal laws that impede/discourage sales.

Electric Vehicle Inclusion to the Highway Trust Fund (HTF)
Unknown savings
VIABILITY: HIGH / MEDIUM / LOW

- Incorporate electric vehicles into the HTF's revenue stream to contribute toward constructing and improving the nation's infrastructure.

H.R. 1152, Water Quality Certification and Energy Project Improvement Act
No budgetary effects
VIABILITY: HIGH / MEDIUM / LOW

- This legislation fixes the *Clean Water Act's* (*CWA*) permitting provision to promote infrastructure development by streamlining the permitting process under section 401 of the *CWA* and clarifying section 401's focus on CWA water quality. CBO's preliminary estimate projected no effect on direct spending or revenues, T&I staff is assessing additional changes in the legislation that may affect direct spending or revenues

H.R. 7023, Creating Confidence in Clean Water Permitting Act
No budgetary effects
VIABILITY: HIGH / MEDIUM / LOW

- The bill would provide regulatory and judicial certainty for regulated entities and communities, increase transparency, and promote water quality, among other provisions. CBO did not produce an estimate, but they continue to work with T&I staff on an estimate of direct spending and revenues; however, they anticipate either no budgetary effect or a relatively small score.

H.R. 5089, Reducing Regulatory Burdens Act
No budgetary effects
VIABILITY: HIGH / MEDIUM / LOW

- This proposal would prohibit the Environmental Protection Agency and states authorized to issue permits under the National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System from requiring a permit for some discharges of pesticides. While CBO estimated no effect on direct spending or revenues, T&I staff is looking at ways to create some sort of scorable effect for this proposal to be appropriate for reconciliation.

Appropriations for Polar Security Cutters
No score yet; deficit increase
VIABILITY: HIGH / MEDIUM / LOW

- This proposal would provide mandatory appropriations for long lead materials for polar security cutters number three and four. T&I anticipates any appropriations would be significant and will need to work with CBO on a preliminary estimate to ensure any spending does not fall beyond the ten-year budget window.

Increase Vessel Tonnage Duty
Up to $600 million in 10-year savings
VIABILITY: HIGH / MEDIUM / LOW

- Vessel tonnage duties are imposed on the cargo-carrying capacity of vessels which enter the United States from a foreign port or place or depart from and return to a United States port or place on a 'voyage to nowhere.' In 1990, these rates were raised to nine cents per ton, not to exceed 45 cents per ton in a single year, and 27 cents per ton, not to exceed $1.35 cents per ton in a single year. In 1997, the higher duties were extended through 2002 but once they expired, they returned to the 1990 levels. If these levels are increased, offsetting receipts would go up; T&I staff is still exploring options in this space.

Redirect Oil Spill Liability Trust Fund to deficit reduction
Up to $5 billion in 10-year savings
VIABILITY: HIGH / MEDIUM / LOW

- This proposal would transfer a portion of the Oil Spill Liability Trust Fund's balance for deficit reduction. T&I is contemplating $2 billion transfers in each of the first two years and dropping the transfer to $1 billion in the subsequent three years. T&I is working with CBO to determine a magnitude, but T&I believes that a transfer could potentially achieve outlay savings.

Container Casualty Vessel Act
Unknown costs
VIABILITY: HIGH / MEDIUM / LOW

- This proposal establishes the responsibility of container vessels for response costs and damages related to container vessel casualties. It would limit per incident liability, except in the case of negligence. It also would establish a Container Vessel Marine Casualty Liability Trust Fund (funded with a per container fee) which pays for response and damages until reimbursement can be received, for amounts above the liability limits, and for amounts where the responsible cannot be found or is unable to pay. T&I will require feedback from CBO on any such proposal.

Mrs. MCBATH. In my home State of Georgia, students and families have come to know and love the HOPE and the Zel Miller Scholarships, two programs that will pay for students' full yearly in-State tuition if they keep up their grades. I would like to make this very, very clear, national Republicans are proposing an increase on taxes for students and families in Georgia.

An increase on taxes for families across this country. Students in Georgia know that if you work hard in school, the State will help you get through college, and start a career, but this new tax threatens that promise and undercuts the financial security of Georgia's families, of this Nation's families.

Last year, more than 185,000 Georgians received almost a billion dollars in scholarships and grants through the HOPE Program alone. All of this award money, along with any other scholarship that a student earns would now be considered taxable income if this proposal by House Republicans were to become a law.

I am a mother. I know how important the HOPE and other scholarships are to all the families across this country. I unfortunately never got to send my son, Jordan, off to college, but we certainly had been planning for it. As a single mom working as a flight attendant before I came to Congress, figuring out how we were going to pay for it was something that I thought about often.

Every day. I thought about it until the day that he was murdered. The HOPE Program was something I knew that Jordan and I could rely on, and it would be a gut punch for families who also rely on HOPE and other types of financial aid to no longer be able to count on these programs without receiving a new tax bill. I am horrified at this attempt.

Families and students in our country deserve better. Ms. Nelson, my question is for you. In your testimony, you did talk about the importance of student aid. Can you briefly discuss the impact that taxing scholarships, grants, and fellowships would have on students and families at all income levels?

Mrs. NELSON. Absolutely, and thank you for also mentioning the issue of gun violence. I would be remiss if I did not say that there have been over 700 school shootings in the past fewer than two decades.

To your question about taxation of scholarships, not only is that concerning because it limits the opportunities to achieve higher education, what many who are advocating for so-called school choice will do with those tax dollars is syphon them out of the public education school system, and use them to fund private education for just a few.

Not only is it taking money out of the pockets of people who need that funding to pursue higher education. It is then funneling that money, potentially, into the pockets of private actors who are trying to usurp the public school education system.

Mrs. MCBATH. Is that something that has become more of a problem throughout the nation? It seems increasingly that those dollars are going to that very end. I just wanted to say thank you for that answer, and I know that I will do everything in my power that I can ensure that this proposal never makes it beyond this memo.

I encourage all of my colleagues to fight back against this tax increase that will make students' and families' lives harder and more

expensive back home. I am talking to my constituents, and they are scared to death. How are they going to be able to afford to send their children to college? Most of the students across the Nation, they need help. They need financial assistance, and why are we cutting them below the knees and preventing them from having what they deserve?

It is a global and stellar academic education. They have to be able to globally compete, and this does not do that. Thank you, and I yield back.

Chairman WALBERG. I thank the gentlelady. Now, I recognize the gentleman from Ohio, Mr. Rulli.

Mr. RULLI. Thank you, Chairman Walberg. Mrs. Neily, we have seen Trump's work to combat DEI in schools. What else could be done to address left wing influence in our public-school systems?

Mrs. NEILY. Oversight is a tremendously important thing. The executive orders are a great first step, but there is a lot of work to be done in Congress to put meat on the bones, to actually put the regulations in place, and so I think a lot of school board members are concerned about how this is going to affect them. They have seen that ed tech vendors have dropped the use of pronouns, and so people are worried about exposure.

I think that to the extent that we are able to offer some reassurance of how this process will unfold in a clear and orderly manner, I think that is important. As we know, these activists are willing to die on this hill of dividing students along amenable characteristics along race, along sex, along things like that.

It is in the curriculum, it is in programming, it is in teacher training materials, and so there really needs to be a top to bottom examination, both at the local level, the State level, and the Federal level. I know that the Department of Education has taken steps to put people on leave.

I think that needs to extend beyond the Federal Government, as well as going down to local activities because there is so much money, as Mr. Taylor alluded to in the system, but it is not making its way into classrooms. It is not making its way to students that need it. It is not making its way into teacher's pockets.

The growth of the administrative State has been appalling over the past several years, and a lot of the ESSER money that we received, or that we saw doled out under the Biden administration, again was used for DEI programming in blue states like California and Illinois, and it did not make it into addressing the tremendous learning loss that our children faced.

Let us remember, even before the pandemic, American education was not in great shape. Our children deserve better. We have a lost generation of children right now that deserve an actual quality education.

Mr. RULLI. I cannot agree with you more. I was a school board member for 8 years, and the exciting thing I have seen in the last 2 years, you know, Ohio is, you know, it is a home ruled State, so we like to bring them back to the basics, but even when you look at Virginia, if you really want to take the school systems back throughout the country, you want to start at the school board meetings.

Normally we know at a school board meeting it is very low attended, normally, unless there is something really big and controversial going on. No one shows up there, but you know, the people have a very big voice within a school board, and school board members know we will be responsible for our constituents to be reelected, so your suggestions to parents that are concerned with things that their kids tell them that are taught in the school, and how they approach that school board. Do you have anything for that?

Mrs. NEILY. My organization has guides for parents' questions to ask, ways to speak, how to get involved. We are on the phone with parents 7 days a week talking them through their 2-minute comments, making sure they are hitting the high points. This is very much a case of the price of liberty is eternal vigilance.

We cannot be everywhere. You cannot be everywhere. The Department of Education cannot be everywhere. I think we have watched over the past 4 years Americans beginning to re-engage their civic engagement muscles, that had frankly atrophied. Many people focus on the Federal Government, but where you live matters.

Your backyard matters, your local elected officials matter. For people to be able to get involved in that and not be shouted down by their school board members, who frankly do not want the feedback, but they are not doing a great job, is a terrific first start.

Mr. RULLI. I completely agree. Now, Mrs. Neily, you also mentioned that the schools are eliminating gifted and talented, and even I mean I am even hearing AP classes. Is this in the name of DEI? Why is this an awful decision in your opinion for the students?

Mrs. NEILY. Yes, unfortunately we are watching what is called de-tracking, multi-level classes are now considered a bad thing because some districts feel that the wrong races, or the wrong kinds of students are in these classes, and so the solution then is frankly ripped out of Kurt Vonnegut's Harrison Bergeron, it is bring down the best performers so that everyone is frankly, equally a low performer.

My daughter is in a gifted program, and she gets bored when she is not challenged. I think we want as a country, to encourage students to excel, to work hard. These are virtues that made America the envy of the world, and so why we would turn those aside and say no, no, no, that is privilege, no, that is white supremacy, is something that is such a slap in the face.

My grandparents met in an internment camp, and they were able to pull themselves up out of poverty after they got out of the camps. To deny other people, or for teachers and administrators to tell people because of your skin color you cannot achieve, or you cannot do better, the country is systemically racist is a real insult.

You know, students lack the basic skills to succeed in a global economy, and so we should try to bring up the low performers but also celebrate the high performers.

Mr. RULLI. Okay. I completely agree, again. I think AP classes maybe could be what unites both sides of the aisle to get back to where we get our kids as to eye of the prize, so thank you so much,

Mrs. Neily, and with that I yield my time back to the Chair, thank you.

Chairman WALBERG. I thank the gentleman. I recognize the educator for Connecticut, Ms. Hayes.

Mrs. HAYES. Thank you, and thank you to all our witnesses for testifying. I do not know who hurt you, or what teachers your children have been exposed to, but that is—none of this has ever been a part of my experience. This week the Washington Post reported that the administration is preparing an executive order to abolish the Department of Education.

President Trump has long promised to abolish the Department, and Elon Musk has reiterated these proposed goals on his social media platforms. Since its creation in 1979, the Department of Education has been committed to ensuring high quality education for children across the country.

As the Chairman noted, there are about one million children who participate in private school choice programs, but 49.6 million children participate in public school education. What about them? Who is advocating for them? There are not enough slots in charter school programs for all 49 million of those children.

The Department protects the civil rights of students, supports students from low-income backgrounds, develops and prepares educators, provides resources for English learners, and is responsible for 1.6 trillion dollars in Federal loan programs. In addition, the Department runs the National Assessment of Educational Progress, and collects statistics on enrollment, staffing, and crime in school.

The Individuals with Disabilities Acts, makes free and appropriate public education available to eligible children with disabilities. In the 2022 and 2023 school years, 7.5 million students received special education, or related services through IDEA or the equivalent of 15 percent of all public school students.

Shutting down the Department of Education would profoundly impact Title I schools. It is telling that none of the witnesses on this panel could say affirmatively yes, that the Department should be shut down because you know that the answer is no.

The Department administers 18.4 billion in Title I program funding to low-income K–12 schools. Also, as I mentioned, the Department runs 1.6 trillion in student loan programs, one of its largest missions. Mr. Cooper, in your opening you talked a lot about the cost of college.

I think that the conversation we should be having is how do we lower the cost of education, not discourage it. While many of you have a very short memory, I chose to go to college because my grandmother could not. There were laws prohibiting it.

While you throw around and weaponize words like diversity, equity and inclusion, the NAACP Legal Defense Fund did not come into play in these conversations as a nice gesture. It was to push back on laws that prohibited people like my grandmother from pursuing higher education.

While you are correct, Mr. Taylor, we need to prepare the next generation workforce, as we know in an industrialized nation, that is not just going to be people who work in factories. That is going to be the doctors and the lawyers, and the teachers, and the social

workers, and the community leaders, the engineers, which all require college degrees.

What we should be doing is trying to make every opportunity available to every student that wants it, no matter what that opportunity is. Ms. Nelson, can you talk a little bit about what would happen to the 7.5 million children who receive services related to IDEA from the Department of Education, and need for us to be advocating for them.

What would happen to them if the Department is dismantled?

Mrs. NELSON. Well, I am glad that you mentioned the number of Federal statutes that the Department of Education is responsible for enforcing, along with the Department of Justice. Children who need IEPs, individual education plans, because they learn differently, because they have challenges in different ways would be bereft of any Federal support without the Department of Education.

They would have to rely on State and local governments that are often underfunded and often do not have the expertise to enforce Federal law. The Department of Education is an absolute necessity to the survival and thriving of this Nation's students, and especially those who are more challenged.

Mrs. HAYES. Have you seen a push for all of these voucher programs and private charter school programs—a push to attract those students?

Mrs. NELSON. No. That is the problem.

Mrs. HAYES. I have not either.

Mrs. NELSON. That is the problem. That is the problem with these private schools being funded with public tax dollars. Private schools are not required to accept all students. They often reject students who have learning disabilities, or who somehow do not fit the mold of a private school child.

Mrs. HAYES. Thank you, my time has expired. I yield back.

Chairman WALBERG. Thank the gentlelady, and I recognize the gentleman from Missouri, a new member of the Committee, glad to have you on it, Mr. Onder.

Mr. ONDER. Thank you, Chairman Walberg, and thank you to the witnesses for appearing here today. In the United States, today we are faced with a cruel irony that regarding K to 12 education over the last decade, and this trend does go back much further.

We have spent more and more on education, public education and gotten worse and worse outcomes. I spent a decade in the Missouri General Assembly, 8 years of that on the Senate Education Committee. Over and over again, lobbyists for the school administrators, the school board association, the teachers' unions, came to our Committee, and they had one message, give us more money.

Give us more money. In Missouri, and these are national statistics, indeed we have been giving public education more money. We are up to now about almost 16,000 per student K to 12. At the same time here are NAEP Scores, of which the most recent data came last week.

These are plummeting. They plummeted worse after COVID. I would say not after COVID, after the government response to COVID, which was very dysfunctional and very harmful.

We had this irony that we are spending more, and we are getting less in the way of favorable outcomes. At the same time, we have—what are we spending the money on? Well, here—here is a graph of the growth. In blue and the green are the growth of students and teachers, about 8 percent both, almost identical.

37 percent growth in principals and assistant principals, and 88 percent growth in other administrators. By the way, the teachers make on average $70,000 a year, actually a little less in Missouri, unfortunately. The administrators on average make $103,000 a year.

This is where our money is going. This is where our money is going. We are taking our eye off the ball, and not focusing on what really matters, which is these teachers teaching these students how to read and write, and do math. What is worse is we are getting our eye off the ball in other ways.

Instead of teaching, reading and writing and math, not what to think, but how to think. Instead, you know, Mrs. Neily, we are spending time doing things like well, running urgent care centers in schools, and all the wrap around services, whatever. If we cannot teach kids how to read, what are we doing running pediatrics offices and urgent care clinics?

Even worse yet, we are indoctrinating these kids with pernicious ideologies. Kids are learning about the 15 latest genders but not how to do multiplication, division and all. Mrs. Neily, just I believe, by the way, I believe that the Federal Government is playing a very negative role in all of this. The Federal Government is only providing 11 percent of the funding but driving this administrative bloat.

What can we—and I believe abolishing the Department of Education is definitely a big part of the solution. There are some good functions in the Department of Education, IEPs, and so on, but they could be spun off. Mrs. Neily, how could we get back on the focus of how—of educating kids, rather than indoctrination and, you know, bloating our school bureaucracies?

Mrs. NEILY. Unfortunately, I think a fish rots from the head. President Biden had a day one executive order injecting equity into everything, and we saw that play out in the form of grants, in the form of other things. As you know, he who pays the piper calls the tune.

Every Federal dollar that goes out the door has strings attached to it where they know that they have to prioritize equity over student excellence. Let us think back to the NEA's annual meeting several years ago where the General Assembly vote did not vote through to focus on student excellence, but they do learn things like abortion, foreign policy, and things like that.

We have teachers union leaders that have sold off their members, prioritizing things like restorative justice over actually educating children, keeping teachers safe. Teachers right now have taken on such a large load. They are an emotional support animal. They are a generous support transition counselor.

That is like a $250,000 a year job, that is not a $50,000 a year job.

Mr. ONDER. Right.

Mrs. NEILY. Our teachers deserve better, and I think they want to get back to the basics because that is what they were hired for.

Mr. ONDER. You know and when I talk to teachers in my district, and I am a physician. When I have talked to my patients who are teachers, they do not want to do any of that. A great majority of them do not. Some are idealogues, but the great majority do not.

They are doing it because as you say, the Federal Government is driving this train, they are paying the piper, they are calling the tune. Thank you for your testimony. I yield back.

Chairman WALBERG. I thank the gentleman, and now I recognize the gentleman from New York, Mr. Mannion, welcome.

Mr. MANNION. Thank you, Mr. Chair. Thank you Ranking Member Scott, and thank you to the witnesses that are joining us here today. I was a former teacher of almost 30 years. I taught science, physics, astronomy, geology, chemistry, AP biology, 15 to 1 living environment. I worked directly with students, families, and other teachers.

Education is the great equalizer. It is also the great stabilizer, and our public schools are the cores of our community. I was also the founding Chairman of the New York State Senate Committee on Disabilities. I am also a parent. I understand how critical it is to make sure that our schools are well funded, that our students have all the resources they need to be successful, and that our teachers are supported, and have that as well.

In the New York 22d congressional District, it is the home to great public schools that are supported by our communities. Families choose to move to my district because of our fantastic schools. Between my wife and I, we spent nearly 60 years in a classroom, and we spent those years in both private, public, urban, suburban and other settings.

I have seen the disparities that exist between our own public schools, and the inequities that impact the chances of students meeting the great American dream, and having that great equalizer of public education. I am glad that we are having this conversation today because there are areas of education that do need improvement, but some of the things that I have heard today have nothing to do with what is happening in the classrooms.

I encourage, as the previous Congressman mentioned, that you have conversations with your teachers, with your friends that are teachers, with your family members that are teachers that you trust. Also, as a New York State Legislator, I was proud to support record funding for our schools as they are performing more necessary functions for our communities, and we are asking teachers, social workers, and school psychologists, to do more than they ever had before.

As the cores of our community, they have the ability to do so and have. I have also increased expansion of universal pre-K into various areas of the State. I more than doubled apprenticeship funding, so that people can change careers at whatever point in their lifetimes, including in their secondary education setting, and that has transformed lives.

My question is for Ms. Neily. I started teaching in 1993. Since that time, we have increased the number of parent teacher organizations specializing in things like special education PTOs. We also

have an increased number of meet-the-teacher nights. We live stream school board meetings. We have websites that have access to syllabi, curriculum.

We have easy access to teachers with emails and phone calls. Beyond all that, we also have students in classrooms with cell phones that are audiotaping, videotaping, or livestreaming instruction in those classes. My question is yes or no question. Do you believe over the course of the last generation that parents have less access and input into education?

Mrs. NEILY. Yes, I do.

Mr. MANNION. I would argue that my experience and my wife's experience in a classroom, and my experience as a parent, your comment is highly subjective, and inaccurate.

Mrs. NEILY. Thousands of parents around this country would love to have access that your district does. I have talked to hundreds of parents around the country who have to file public records requests on a regular basis to have access to those curriculum, to have access to lesson plans.

I myself, through my organization, have paid approximately $100,000 over the past 4 years to gain access to emails, lesson plans and things like that. I know how to fight, but most average parents do not know how to. When they do ask questions, when they show up at a school board, they are shouted down, they are called names.

They are doxed by their colleagues and by members of the school board.

Mr. MANNION. Thank you, Ms. Neily. I believe what you are referring to are very outlying instances.

Mrs. NEILY. I believe you are——

Mr. MANNION. In New York we have over a half a million students that are identified as students with disabilities. I participated in CSE meetings, and both sides of that table. Parents understand that it is necessary to continue the Department of Education, and that these students receive a fair and appropriate public education.

Do you believe that fulfilling our Federal requirements for our students with disabilities is a distraction, as you have stated in the past?

Mr. OWENS [presiding]. Excuse me, your time has expired.

Mr. MANNION. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Mr. OWENS. Thank you, thank you so much. I would like to now—Mr. Harris, North Carolina.

Mr. HARRIS. Yes, sir. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and to all of our witnesses, thank you all for your participation today in this hearing, and I have had the opportunity to review your testimoneys. Ms. Neily, I was taken in your testimony that you mentioned the threat of foreign adversaries posed to our students.

We know from reports, from watchdog organizations like yours, that foreign funding is an issue at the K through 12 level, and in higher education.

Calls of the lack of accountability and transparency, this is likely just the tip of the iceberg of what we know. For example, this Committee worked with the Select Committee on the CCP and found that nearly two dozen universities across the country had special-

ized joint research partnerships with China involving sensitive military technology.

I am particularly shocked by the lack of caution our schools have when partnering with our greatest foreign adversaries, such as the Chinese Communist Party. In fact, all of this led me to introduce the No Contracts with Foreign Adversaries Act, which would begin to tackle this problem at the collegiate level by requiring institutions to disclose contracts with China, North Korea, Russia and Iran.

My question to you, Mrs. Neily, is can you just elaborate what harm does the take money first and ask questions later approach have for our students, as well as for our national security?

Mrs. NEILY. Unfortunately, I think most school districts are not aware of the threat that is posed. In Fairfax, the Thomas Jefferson School for Science and Technology, formally America's No. 1 Magnet School partnered with the Tsinghua University High School, which is that partners with Tsinghua University, a Chinese military school that is supervised by the Chinese defense industry, according to the Australian security policy studies.

The Simpson County Board of Education in Kentucky entered into an agreement with the North China Electric Power University, which works directly with the Chinese government's energy sector to push China's global energy initiatives as part of its belt and road initiative.

These are things that local school boards and school districts are not aware of whatsoever. Often times this is secure or classified information that these kinds of things are taking place. For us to open our doors, and open our data bases to these foreign adversaries, is something that I think is appalling, and that really needs Federal intervention, so thank you for your work.

Mr. HARRIS. Well, and thank you for your work, and for again, bringing this information forward because I think it is going to be absolutely critical in protecting our national security as well as our students going forward.

Switching gears just a little bit, in the public school system, Ms. Neily, and this again is to you, who currently has more influence over a child's intellectual development, parents or bureaucrats?

Mrs. NEILY. Unfortunately, it seems to be bureaucrats at this moment in time. When you have school officials that are telling children that their parents love is conditional, but their parents might not love them because of their religion, or their politics, that really throws up a wall that unfortunately is going to create lasting damage, much beyond a child's graduation from high school.

What parents often I talk to them, and they say they have to deprogram their kids from what happens in school. There is both the pressure of trying to conform to and please an authority figure, like a teacher or a principal, as well as the peer pressure because everyone else around them is also getting inculcated with the same materials.

Mr. HARRIS. Well, I think—and as a followup to that I think your point is well taken, is the Federal system of supporting education really structured to empower parents, or is it set up more to empower school systems themselves?

Mrs. NEILY. Right. I mean I think, you know, looking at the influence that the teachers' union leadership has had over the Federal Government over the past several years is something that I know is likely to taper off over the next coming years, and I think American families are excited about that.

Mr. HARRIS. Well, and I would like to give a moment just to discuss any examples you have seen of parental rights being trampled on at the expense of the woke gender movement that I think all of us in the country have been aware of.

Mrs. NEILY. I think in Eau Claire, Wisconsin, they had a sign up, and they also have teacher training materials that said, you know, the right to know a child's gender identity is something that must be earned. I mean the idea that I have to earn information about my child is something that is appalling.

We have watched districts weaponize FERPA, the Federal Education Rights and Privacy Act, saying that children have a right to privacy from their parents. That was not the original intent of the law, and to watch local officials take and bastardize something that was intended to be both a sword and a shield for families, is something again that is a deep slap in the face.

There are Federal statutes in place. The PPRA where that governs the amount of information of what can be, what questions districts can collect from students. Often times school officials do not even know that there are things where if they are asking students about sexuality, about drug use, about politics, that they have to notify parents and give families an opportunity to opt out.

That is because school officials are not learning what their obligations are under the law, when they learn from their school associations, and they learn from the superintendent association, the principal's association, they are learning about woke topics instead of learning about their actual responsibilities.

Mr. HARRIS. Well, thank you so much, and I would say, I mean you have been a wealth of information this morning, and all of you on the panel. We appreciate again, your service, and the information that you have made us aware of today. Mr. Chairman, I yield back my time.

Mr. OWENS. Thank you. I would now like to recognize my friend from Oregon, Ms. Bonamici.

Ms. BONAMICI. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you to the witnesses. I am not going to sit in this hearing today and pretend that everything is normal because it is not. We are barely 2 weeks into the new administration. We have already seen extreme attacks on public education straight out of the Project 2025 playbook.

Here is a reminder. Members of Congress swear to support and defend the United States Constitution. No member of either party should stay silent as the Trump administration and Elon Musk take unconstitutional and illegal actions to withhold appropriated funding, or to violate our constitutional separation of powers.

I know that Democrats, and hopefully some Republicans, because we have seen that over the years, will stand against attempts to weaken or dismantle our system of public education, or divert Federal dollars from public schools to private educational institutions that are only available to a few, and generally not accountable for their students' safety and success.

Yesterday, I was proud to introduce House Resolution 94 with more than 60 of my colleagues in defense of public education and in defense of the civil rights protections provided to students under the authority of the U.S. Department of Education, an authority that is granted by Congress.

I have to say I am pretty disappointed that the Chair of this Committee said yesterday that he would support efforts to depower the Department of Education. We are all here to, I would hope, do what is best for the students in this country.

Ms. Nelson, you testified that voucher programs and the lack of the kind of public school accountability and transparency that is required of public schools, do they obscure whether taxpayer dollars are effectively spent and whether students receive the support they need?

That was in your testimony. You also testified that divestment from public education in favor of privatized education will exacerbate the kind of transparency and accountability that is in the public system. I also want to note that I represent a lot of rural communities. I represent urban communities as well, and in rural communities, they do not want their public education dollars taken away and say here, we are taking away your public education dollars, here is a voucher.

There is no place to use it because there is no place even close by to use a voucher. What are the challenges with holding private schools accountable? Do we know how students are doing in these schools?

Mrs. NELSON. Yes, and thank you for naming the elephant in the room, the elephant in this country, and that is what is basically a grand larceny of our entire Federal Government, while we stand by and watch folks in this room attempt to pickpocket public education.

You talk about transparency and accountability, and I have heard that mentioned by some of the witnesses on this panel. If we are serious about those two concepts, we know that private education does not have the same oversight that public education does. It certainly would not have sufficient oversight if we were to dismantle the Department of Education.

Private schools operate under the radar. We do not get to collect the same data and information that we do in public schools, so the idea that we are necessarily giving children a better education in private school is anecdote. It is not clear.

Ms. BONAMICI. I do not mean to interrupt.

Mrs. NELSON. Sure.

Ms. BONAMICI. I want to get through my questions. What happens if parents take one of these vouchers and then go to a private school, and they discover that gosh, this is not everything they promised, is there any recourse for them?

Mrs. NELSON. Well, they can try to return to a public school, but if we were to take this to its full logical conclusion, and parents are shopping children around to different private schools, we know that the infrastructure of public schools in the public school system will significantly deteriorate.

Ms. BONAMICI. I appreciate that, and I wish I had 5 hours to dispel some of the myths that I have heard here today, but I want to ask you about this so-called parent's rights campaign.

Mrs. NELSON. Yes.

Ms. BONAMICI. That calls for narrow minded book bans and revision of curricula. Now, everybody in this Committee knows, because it is the law, that the Federal Government does not have dictate curriculum. A lot of the issues I have heard discussed here today are local issues.

Recent efforts, including the so-called parents bill of rights that actually moved through the House last Congress, have been written in ways that could really harm vital mental health support for students, and behavioral healthcare, the need for behavioral healthcare, is something I hear about constantly.

In fact, the National Association of School Psychologists indicated that the bill would "undoubtedly exacerbate the youth mental health crisis and undermine efforts to improve school safety." I hope we all care about school safety, and if we really cared about school safety, we would do something about gun violence.

How would this Republican parent's bills of rights, and the dismantling of the Department of Education affect resources and policies that foster a safe and healthy school climate, and how would students, schools, and communities be harmed?

Mrs. NELSON. Well, children need additional supports. Of course, we all agree that children should receive basic education. They should leave school with skills. They should learn reading, math and everything else, but they also require additional supports as any parent knows, as I know, as a parent.

Students are not just what they learn in the textbook. They are nurtured by their teachers, they are nurtured by their environments, and they deserve the types of investments that will enable them to succeed. What we have heard a lot today is a lot of anecdotal conspiracy rhetoric about what is happening in schools.

As a proud product of the public school system, and a proud parent of children who have attended public schools, I have seen nothing of the sort of what is been alleged today.

Ms. BONAMICI. The same. I spent years as a very involved public-school parent, and I have to say that children do not learn when they are hungry, or when they are sick, so the thought of withdrawing support for students is not appropriate, is baffling. I yield back.

Mr. OWENS. Thank you. I would like to now recognize my friend from Indiana, Mr. Messmer.

Mr. MESSMER. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Taylor, apprenticeships are a proven model, paid, on the job training with related technical instruction to educate workers for career success. Despite the growth over the past decade, registered apprentices only make up about three-tenths of a percent of the workforce.

What are the greatest barriers to broader adoption of apprenticeships from an employer standpoint, and what are some of the challenges in engaging students to pursue those apprenticeships?

Mr. TAYLOR. Thank you, Mr. Messmer. We—so, we are huge, huge supporters of apprenticeships. From SHRM's standpoint, we need them again, to address the worker shortage, and more impor-

tantly the skilled worker shortage. The earlier that we can allow people, for example, who do have college degrees to gain experience while in college often through registered apprenticeships, we are increasing that pipeline of highly qualified workers.

The barriers are one, the word apprenticeship suggests, especially when you speak to people coming out of higher ed, that it is not quite, you know, you do not need an apprenticeship. I am a lawyer for example, and my apprenticeship was considered a summer associateship. It is the way we talk about it that has made it less attractive to students, and so they do not rush to that because they assume that apprenticeship is tied to me becoming a welder, which is a very good job, and they pay more than that lawyer, who graduated from law school.

At the end of the day, we have to work on what has been a stigmatization of that word apprentice. That is a barrier. Then second, and significantly for historically underrepresented communities, oftentimes these apprenticeships are unpaid.

I have got to tell you as much as one wants to get experiential treatment, if you do not—if you have to choose between, and oftentimes children—I was one of those children, who had to spend the summer making money to pay for school for the next year. If I had the choice—had to make the tough choice between an unpaid apprenticeship and working a job that did not necessarily give me skills that would prepare me to be a better lawyer, but one was unpaid. That is a problem.

To the extent this Congress can help us fund those apprenticeships, those are the two significant barriers that we see. By the way, it is not limited to historically underrepresented groups, there are a number of majority members who come from places like West Virginia, where they may be financially challenged, and they cannot participate in apprenticeship programs because of funding.

Mr. MESSNER. Thank you. Mrs. Neily, tomorrow I will introduce the Instruct Act, which will require intelligence agencies to boost their inner agency coordination on foreign harm influence in our schools, along with retroactively share all past reports on the topic across departments. In your opinion, do you view this legislation as a step in the right direction?

Mrs. NEILY. I think absolutely it is a step in the right direction. Schools collect such a vast amount of data about children on a regular basis, and frankly, it is not secured very well. We all hear on a regular basis about schools being hacked, data being held by ransomware.

What is going to happen when that—with the information about either military families, or just average families, is held by a hostile, foreign power that seeks to exploit us. I think it is terrifying, and I think your bill is a step in the right direction.

Mr. MESSMER. Thank you. Does accepting money from foreign sources lead to education system being beholden to the values and influences that do not share American values?

Mrs. NEILY. Absolutely. We do not know who is writing the books. I think for parents to actually know that information means that they can make an informed decision whether they want their child to enroll in a Mandarin course taught by a Communist Party official, or if maybe they want to take a Spanish course instead.

Parents deserve the right to make that decision, with complete information, which as of this moment in time they currently do not have.

Mr. MESSMER. Thank you. In my home State, school choice programs have shown to statistically benefit minority populations at a much higher ratio than the rest of the population. Mrs. Nelson, can you validate with statistical data, rather than anecdotal claims that school choice programs penalize minority students?

Mrs. NELSON. Certainly. I am so glad that you raised your State of Indiana where more than a quarter of the students, who are required to repeat grades in your State are black, and nearly a tenth are Latino. I will tell you that school vouchers, in many of the programs that we are aware of, have actually decreased the learning of the students who have those vouchers.

It has not improved their educational outcomes. It has left them——

Mr. MESSMER. You can provide a statistical data to show that?

Mrs. NELSON. I can, I can provide statistical data.

Mr. MESSMER. Well, that is a little contrary to what we have seen in our State, so.

Mrs. NELSON. Well, I am happy to share what our studies have shown, and in fact, if we look at the State of South Carolina, I will give you that example, where the Supreme Court of the State of South Carolina just last November in a court case held that their voucher program contradicted the State Constitution, and was unconstitutional because it drained resources from the public school system.

There are significant concerns, not only about the educational value when you use school vouchers, but also what it does to destroy the public school system for the rest of the children, the vast majority of children who are left without vouchers and are in the public school system.

We do not just want to focus on those who have vouchers. We want to focus on the majority of students in this country, the nearly 50 million who do not have vouchers to shop around and try to find a better education.

Mr. MESSMER. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, I yield back.

Mr. OWENS. Thank you. I would like to now recognize from Pennsylvania, Ms. Lee.

Ms. LEE. Thank you, Mr. Chair. I am glad that we are having this hearing today because I do strongly agree that the State in America, excuse me, the State of education in America, should be a concern for all of us. I think that perhaps I disagree on what are the most serious threats. I disagree on the seriousness of the assertion that those most serious threats are things such as woke ideology, or radical indoctrination, or the fact that you know, LGBTQ+ people exist.

I, however, do believe that among the most serious threats are the active and deliberate dismantling of public education. Republicans focus on demonizing our most marginalized students to distract from the fact that they have no intention, or we of course, have simply not heard of any intention to actually improve the State of education.

Throughout not just this hearing, but in general around this topic, we hear a lot of buzz words, such as school choice, our parents' rights, our education freedom, our indoctrination, our Federal overreach, and that is by no coincidence.

These are talking points that we saw, were core tenets of Project 2025. In this plan conservatives outlined how they would dismantle the Department of Education, gut public education, strip away civil rights protections, and impose an extremely ideological agenda on our schools.

Right now, the President is reportedly preparing an executive order to bypass Congress and illegally impound funds within the Department of Education, a first step toward dismantling the agency altogether.

The President has promised to attack these institutions, and he is doing that. Let us be clear about what these policies really mean because we have seen them before. These are the same arguments that were used to resist desegregation, to justify pulling public dollars out of integrated schools and pouring them into segregated academies, and to privatize or prioritize incarceration over the education of black and brown students.

The language has changed, but the goals seem to remain the same. Attorney Nelson, when we hear conservatives pushing for parental rights and claim to be fighting against indoctrination, what do you see are the natural consequences of these efforts. What influence do you think it has on our students' curricula, or the learning environment for the students or the teachers?

Mrs. NELSON. Yes. We absolutely believe that parents should be involved in children's education. This is not a new concept. If you talk to any teacher, any teacher would welcome parents to engage. What we do not want is parents to try to override the expertise of teachers who we have hired because they are specialized in teaching and training students about what should be in the curricula, about what should be in terms of our national standards, right?

Federal laws that have been passed, that have been informed by experts' research, and other data, not the anecdotes that people want to bring to advance their own political ideology. Inviting extremist groups like Moms for Liberty to determine what the curricula of this country would be, would be absolutely disastrous.

They would be pedaling an indoctrination by ignorance. Indoctrination by deprivation of knowledge, and that certainly does not allow us to be a competitive country and does not serve all of our children to succeed.

Ms. LEE. Yes. Very quickly, do you believe that dismantling the Department of Education would help us fulfill the promises of Brown?

Mrs. NELSON. Absolutely not. It would be counter to the very promise of Brown. The Department of Education began because we recognized the need for there to be national standards and national oversight of our public education system, and for there to be a Federal apparatus to enforce our Federal civil rights laws as they pertain to education, and other laws.

Ms. LEE. Thank you. How do you think, if at all, do these conservative policies or proposals make our students more competitive, improve the global standing of the United States, or prepare our

students to enter emerging careers, or ensure that our students will be prepared to address the significant challenges on the horizons?

Ms. NELSON. No. To the extent that these conservative policies attack diversity, equity and inclusion, basic principles of fairness. Those are America last policies. Those are not policies that will advance our students to become competitive in an increasingly global marketplace, in an increasingly global economy.

We should be leveraging our diversity. It is our greatest strength. We should be leveraging multi-linguicism. Instead, we are trying to find ways to really narrow the focus of our education and to replace it with conservative, extremist ideology.

Ms. LEE. Thank you. While the most harm, per usual, will be black and brown students, students with disabilities, and other marginalized students, we will all pay the price as Attorney Nelson just said. While our commitment to racism may be lucrative for the billionaires running the administration right now, the rest of this Nation will learn that we will all sink or swim together.

The outcomes in this investment reserved or accepted for black students will be reflected in our global State in tech and innovation. While other nations invest in all of their students to increase their global competitiveness, racism in our public schools will serve as an anchor for ours. I thank you and the panel, and I yield back.

Chairman WALBERG. I thank the gentlelady, and I recognize the Vice-Chairman of our Committee, Mr. Owens from Utah.

Mr. OWENS. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. First of all, this is such an important hearing, the State of our education. One of the most important conversations we are going to have about our most important national resource, our children. It has been interesting. First of all, we can all agree, based on recent results, that our present educational system is failing our children miserably.

We pay more per child than any other industrialized country except Luxembourg, and yet 60 percent, this is not anecdotal, 60 percent of our fourth graders, 70 percent, this is not anecdotal, of our eighth graders are failing, based on the NAEP reading and math proficiency scores.

We are paying more per student with a lower rate of return on investment, 70 percent failure rate, and we can no longer do this. I will be honest with you. I would be a little bit more accepting as a stakeholder in the NAACP if they were not silent when 75 percent of our black boys were found in 2017 not to be able to read and write in the State of California.

We have here in Baltimore, zero proficiency in math for many of our students. We have black mothers and fathers lining up to get into a choice, a voucher program because they are living in a ZIP Code, the kids cannot get educated. We have the audacity to say we are experts at education. The parents are ignorant, and yet we have this remarkably failing system.

The answer has been so far let us put more money into it. You know, I have been hearing this for 40 years. We cannot disturb—we cannot mess up this system because institutions because our kids—we cannot take our kids out because that institution will fail.

Well, when we have this kind of failure, we need to make sure our kids are focused in that direction. We need correction through

innovation, merit through every piece of the pipeline, and when we do that is have this conversation about giving our parents a choice.

Ms. Neily, I want to say thank you. It is good to see you again, and I thank you, the support you have for thousands upon thousands of parents across this country that are not really respected in this body here. You are the stakeholders. As a parent, I know what is best for my kid, and I would think everybody in this room would feel the same way.

You would do everything you could to get your child out of a failing school system. Well, we need to start looking at other people's children the way we look at ours. Ms. Neily, in your testimony you mentioned the school district has paid DEI consultants millions of dollars. Can you explain to us exactly how those DEI consultants have been—what they were paid for?

Mrs. NEILY. Sure. In 2021, we released what we called our consultant report card. We identified over 100 consultants with hundreds of contracts in dozens of districts across the country, making money hand over fist. Encouraging districts to do things like privilege walks, privilege bingo, things that are not helping children, but are actively hurting them.

A study by the Network Contagion Research Institute showed that DEI programming, surprise, surprise, leads to more divisions in interpersonal relationships. When we see districts spend money on this, it actually might have been better use literally lighting in a fire, because at least then children would be warm instead of hating each other.

Mr. OWENS. Dr. Cooper, critics of the market based and accountability mechanisms, such as risk sharing and performance funding, often argue that they would punish the open access institutions, or deter colleges from enrolling low-income students, who have a lower likelihood of success.

However, these critics do not seem to fit your testimony as it relates to accountability systems, proposed under the College Cost Reduction Act. What did you find in your analysis of the bill's accountability system, and do you believe the schools would ultimately reduce the share of low income and disadvantaged students they enrolled as a result?

Mr. COOPER. My analysis of the College Cost Reduction Act, excuse me, found the exact opposite of what the critics allege. We find that open access institutions, community colleges, regional public 4 years would actually benefit from the College Cost Reduction Act because the CCRA rewards schools for enrolling low-income students, and also serving them well, getting them through, making sure they graduate, making sure that they have good earnings after graduation, and that they are keeping their prices to a reasonable level.

Mr. OWENS. Okay. Thank you. I have a question, Mr. Taylor. I am going to have done in writing and sent to you. I will just say this. I grew up at a time where education was our gateway, segregated community. We led our country because parents and teachers understood their responsibility to their kids, that our country grows middle class.

Men entering college. Men committed to marriage, percentage of entrepreneurs in a segregated black community because education

was put in place to help our kids, not this institution. We are going to change that, and for those who do not get it yet, let me suggest you go out and talk to some parents who really are stuck in these areas that they cannot get out of.

As a matter of fact, I will take it further. How about taking your kids, and letting them go into these failing schools, and just see how cool it is to have all this other stuff going on, and reading, and writing and understanding math is not a priority. We are going to make this change. I am excited about the process. I look forward to working with my colleagues across the aisle. Kids should come first. That is our top priority. Thank you, and I will yield back, Mr. Chair.

Chairman WALBERG. I thank the gentleman and recognize the passion that allows you to wear a Super Bowl ring. Who should I bet on? No, we will not. I now recognize the gentleman from Texas, a new member of our Committee, glad to have you on it, welcome Mr. Casar.

Mr. CASAR. Thank you, Chairman. Today, we have heard from House Republicans on this Committee, support for Trump and Musk's plan to abolish the Department of Education, to slash critical programs that help students like Title I, Pell grants, financial aid, and programs that help kids learn, all to pay for a tax break for Trump's billionaire buddies and for friends of Elon Musk.

Today, we have heard on the Committee alarming support from House Republicans for a national voucher scam, that would pull money out of our public schools and hand it out in private contracts just to enrich their billionaire donors and/or friends. If you cannot believe it, just take a look at what has happened here over the last couple of months.

Musk has been using the Federal Government to get himself even more rich. He spent 277 million dollars to elect Donald Trump, and since the election he has become 154 billion dollars richer. How is making billionaires richer, while taking money away from our kids—how is that good for education? How is that good for student outcomes? How is that good for our community? How is that good for our taxpayers?

It is good for no one, but Trump's ego, and for Musk's pocketbook. In places like Texas, I have seen rural Republicans speak out against these voucher scams because they know that pulling money out of our teachers and out of our public schools to hand over to unaccountable voucher schools is not empowering parents. It is taking money away from parents and handing it to these companies.

For years, unaccountable, unregulated private schools have stolen public money through State voucher programs. We know some of those voucher schools took public funds for kids that were not even intended, or going to those schools, were not attending that school, embezzling millions of dollars.

Elon Musk has used this kind of thing to his advantage for years. Remember that he is a government contractor himself, who is taking untold amounts of money from a Federal Government that he has saying he is trying to make more efficient for somebody, but he is really trying to make it more efficient for himself.

What happens to our students that we want to learn when they have Title I funds cut away from about 60 percent of our public

schools because of this House Republican plan to give a billionaire a tax break? Who fills that gap? Is that our teachers spending their extra money that they barely have so that they could support our students?

Is that local taxpayers that then have to pay to fill the gap essentially backfilling the billionaire tax break that the Republican majority wants to pass? Our public schools that serve, not just poor kids, but working class and middle-class kids going to have to close? How does that improve learning for our students?

We must continue to fight, and I am ready to fight on a bipartisan basis. If we can see some bravery from some number of rural Republicans, just like I have seen in the last few years in places like Texas, who are willing to stand up to the grift, who are willing to stand up to the corruption, are willing to actually stand up for our students.

We can improve our education system, and we can do it without stripping it for parts and selling it to the highest bidder. Trump, Musk , and their minions, want to expand these voucher scams not because they want to improve reading, not because they want to improve math, but because they want to improve their own wealth. They want to improve their own standing in the stock market.

You know, this DOGE supposed agency to me is not the Department of Government Efficiency, it is the Department of Billionaire Corruption. From politically motivated firings this last week, to privatizing education, to eliminating whole departments against the Constitution, all so that private contractors can cash in, Trump and Musk are focused on one thing, enriching themselves no matter what the cost to Americans, and I would hope to hear some House Republican spine against this spineless corruption.

Unfortunately, what I have been hearing in Committee today, Mr. Chairman, is people either being silent, or going along with it even though they know it is going to hurt our kids. Look at State after State after State where they have passed these voucher scams, even Republicans that voted for it.

You talked to them publicly and privately, they say this did not help. All it did was take money away from those schools that are asking for our help. Those people like us that are entrusted with these positions of power, we should be using it responsibly, and not just be going along with the folks that already have more wealth than anybody has ever had in the history of this planet. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, I yield back.

Chairman WALBERG. I thank the gentleman. I now recognize the Chairman of the Workforce Protections Subcommittee, a new member of our Committee as well, Mr. Mackenzie from Pennsylvania.

Mr. MACKENZIE. Well, thank you Mr. Chairman for the opportunity to talk about the State of American education today, and I appreciate all of our testifiers sharing their experiences and their opinions with us. It is an important conversation we are having because when we look at higher education for the years that I have been in public office, both at the State level and here at the Federal level now, we have been touting and advocating choice for individuals in higher education.

We have said that higher education is not only about 4-year colleges, but we have said that there is so many other good options

out there available to students, whether it is career and technical schools, going into the military, going straight into the workforce, then maybe doing continuing education in that particular job.

Lots of choice at the higher education level. What we have in America is we have the best system of higher education in the entire world because of that choice. That is a key element of our higher education system. Then when we talked about K through 12 education, for some reason people want to oppose choice. They want to block choice.

They want to hold people in positions where they are failing, or they are not secure in their own school districts. I want to give the example of a family that came to me to talk about their young daughter who is in high school. She is a low-income student, but she is in a very good school district. By all accounts she should have been getting a good education, but ultimately she became the victim of bullying.

I am just talking about light bullying, or you know, friendly jostling in the hallways. This was assault. I saw the videos. It was assault, and the school meted out the proper punishment, but ultimately the perpetrator ended up back in the same school, and that student felt like she could not actually go to school and learn in a safe environment, even though it was a good school.

Everybody in the community knows that that is a great school district, and she should be getting a good education. The parents, they wanted to consider their different options. They looked at online schooling, and they said well, that is not going to work for her. That school district did have an online option, but they said we are two working parents, we are not going to be able to be there and supervise her on a day in and day out basis.

She is not going to be able to learn in that kind of environment. We do not feel like she would be safe at home. They looked at private schools. The price was too expensive, she did not qualify for any scholarships, and so that option was closed to them as well because they were not wealthy, they did not have that choice, so that choice was closed out to them.

Finally, there were charter schools in our community. They looked at the charter schools, but those seats were capped because people who wanted to oppose choice said that she could not get an additional seat in that school.

Ultimately she was stuck in this situation where she was in a great school district where almost all of the other students are learning well, but she, as a victim of bullying, was stuck in an environment where she did not feel safe, she was not ultimately going to school, she was not learning, and she was going to be on a path to failing that school year because of opposition to choice.

When people stand up here in opposition to choice, I want to recognize that there are real victims. When you oppose choice, there are people, there are individuals in those classrooms who are the victims of your opposition to choice. What we need to do is we need to talk about expanding choice for everybody, so that every student has that opportunity to succeed.

It should not just be for the wealthy, it should be for every student regardless of your race, regardless of your socioeconomic status. We want that choice for everybody. The public wants that

choice. If you look at public opinion polling, overwhelmingly it is in favor of school choice.

That is the minority position to oppose choice in K through 12 education. That is a losing position, it is failing, it is not only failing our public, it is failing students like the one that I talked about today. What I want to do is I want to raise up those voices of parents.

I want to raise up the voices of advocates for school choice, those are not just buzz words. There are real people and real lives attached to those movements. When we stand here and oppose, I want you to recognize that you are not just opposing choice, you are opposing that girl who is a victim of bullying. You are opposing her getting a better education, a better opportunity and a better life.

That is what you're opposing. Mr. Chairman, I want to thank you for the opportunity to have this discussion at the start of this session about the State of American education. We have lots of things that we can improve upon, but there are so many good things going on across this country that everybody should have access to.

Every single person should have those same opportunities, not just the wealthy, which is what is going on in this country right now. We can expand those opportunities to individuals that are not wealthy and give them the same opportunities as the wealthy by giving them choice.

Mr. Chairman, I will yield back to you, but I just want to say thank you for this opportunity, and I look forward to advancing legislation this session that will help every American student get the best opportunity and the best life they can have. Thank you.

Chairman WALBERG. I thank the gentleman. Now I recognize the Chairman of the Early Childhood Elementary and Secondary Education Subcommittee and a passionate educator himself, Mr. Kiley from California.

Mr. KILEY. Thank you, Mr. Chair. We have just received the latest test scores for students across this country, and they are absolutely alarming. What we see is that the trend continues to be one of decline, as you can see in this chart right here. The bottom part of the graph shows from 2013 to the present average scores in reading and in math, fourth and eighth grade. Then the top of the chart is particularly interesting because that shows the level of spending.

The gray curve there is actually inflation, so you can see the spending line above that exceeds that. This is a steady growth in spending in real dollars that is proceeding in tandem with a steady decline in student achievement.

When we are talking about the reforms that are going to be considered by the President, as well as by this Committee, I certainly welcome any arguments against them that seek to identify what the implications of those reforms might be.

There are two responses that I think are wholly inadequate and are frankly the only responses we have really heard today from the other side of the dais. No. 1 is defending the status quo. This is the status quo. It is failure, continuing decline, a continual dimming of the prospects of America's young people, and a diminished capacity of America to lead the world.

The second response, also inadequate, is to say the solution is to just spend more money under the current system, because as we can see there has been an inverse relationship between spending and student achievement. Mr. Taylor, you mentioned this earlier, that simply spending more money does not necessarily help matters.

Why do you believe that is that we see this actually inverse correlation between spending and student achievement?

Mr. TAYLOR. Well, because we ultimately referred to the K through 16 system has the people who produce the product that we employers buy. We are increasingly seeing a lower quality product come out of the K through 16 system. Sadly, if we go back to the manufacturer, the K through 16 system ultimately the manufacturer is the parents, but you get into the system, and you ask them, and they say well, we are spending more money on it, and we are telling them, but you're not giving us what we need.

There is not enough volume, and the people who do come through often your product often does not have the skills. Some of those are what we call—you call soft skills; we call power skills. They do not know how to interact with other employees. They do not know how to work on teams, they do not know how to show up to work on time.

There is a startling statistic that 20 percent of right now Gen Z parents are showing up to the interviews with them. This is what is happening in the workplace, so we are saying got it. You are spending a lot of money, but we are going to tell you on the other end of this that the product that you are receiving and delivering to us is suboptimal.

Mr. KILEY. Right. This is a characterization of the system as a whole. However, there are examples of schools and school systems that do quite well, that have an excellent educational product. I am very grateful that the Chair has trusted me to lead the Subcommittee that spans K–12 education as well as pre-K, and our overarching goal is going to be to look at how can we make it so these examples of really good schools, and good school systems become the norm, rather than the exception, and I think that there are principles that you can clearly identify with successful school systems.

They allow flexibility in terms of how schools are operated. They demand accountability for actual outcomes, and then they provide parents and families with choices. Now, this of course is generally a characterization of how charter schools work, and charter schools are—have been very successful in many states across the country.

Some of the priorities that our Committee is going to focus on are No. 1, the question of funding. How do we reimagine the role of the Federal Government in education, both when it comes to the bureaucracies that existand how funding gets allocated.

No. 2 is how can we support school choice in states that hold states accountable for policies that run against school choice, whether that be for charter schools or other forms of choice.

No. 3 is how can we assist educators across the country in incorporating the very powerful personalized learning tools that advances in technology have made available. No. 4, is examining how

literacy is being taught across this country. There is still way too many districts and states that do not properly teach literacy.

No. 5, is expanding the role of career education, which I know is a major priority of the Chair, and No. 6 is we need to look at the broken nature of special education funding, which is clearly inadequate for many districts, causing many districts to have to then dip into their general fund budgetand is not giving students with special needs and their families the support that they need.

I think that we have a tremendous opportunity, Mr. Chair, to catalyze absolutely amazing education reform across the country that will go a long way toward helping millions of kids and better preparing our country for global leadership in the future. I yield back.

Chairman WALBERG. I thank the gentleman. We wish you well on those ideas and challenges. I now have the privilege of recognizing the Chairwoman Emeritus of this Committee, Mrs. Foxx from North Carolina.

Mrs. FOXX. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I thank our witnesses for being here today. An important topic that you are dealing with. Dr. Cooper, the Parent Plus Program has been regarded by many as the most predatory program in the Federal student loan portfolio.

Like Grad Plus, these loans have origination fees four times higher than the Stafford loans provided to students at a 9 percent interest rate, which is higher than many private student loans today. Moreover, Parent Plus loans have no limit on how much parents can borrow. Can you discuss the harms of Parent Plus, as well as who is actually benefiting from these programs?

Mr. COOPER. Thank you, Dr. Foxx. The Parent Plus Program is a predatory loan program. There is simply no other way to describe it. As you mentioned, the interest rates exceed 9 percent, the origination fees exceed 4 percent, and what is more, 20 percent of the parents who are getting Parent Plus loans foisted on them by colleges, have an expected family contribution of zero.

What that means is that the Federal Government has determined that those parents can contribute nothing financially to their children's education, yet that same Federal Government is turning around and handing them an effectively unlimited loan.

Now, the ones who really benefit from the Parent Plus Program are the colleges. Out of 5,000 colleges in the United States, just 500 of those use more than 80 percent of Parent Plus loans issued every year.

Mrs. FOXX. Let me do a followup on it. Last Congress, my colleagues on the other side of the aisle claimed that the reforms included in the College Cost Reduction Act, which sunset the Parent Plus Program and reformed undergraduate lending, to allow for more flexible borrowing limits would "cut off access to Federal aid for half of students."

From your expert perspective, is this actually true?

Mr. COOPER. I think that reflects a misunderstanding of what the College Cost Reduction Act actually does. Only 10 percent of college students even use Parent Plus dollars, so it is impossible for half the students to be affected by that, and as a matter of fact the Urban Institute found that over 90 percent of college students

would be unaffected by the limits imposed in the College Cost Reduction Act.

Who would be affected are the schools that are simply charging outrageous amounts and forcing the amounts onto parents. I would say not allowing those schools to foist unlimited loans on the parents is a feature, not a bug.

Mrs. FOXX. Well, a bit of hyperbole then, right? Mr. Taylor, I know employers are thinking about student debt of their employees. We have been trying to address that issue here. I find it crazy that we allow people to borrow unlimited amounts through the Plus Loan Program.

Worse, that we allow parents and even grandparents to borrow unlimited amounts when the Federal Government has determined they have no ability to pay them off, as Dr. Cooper just said. How do you feel about the Plus Loan Program, and do you think it is fair we lend the money out in this manner?

Mr. TAYLOR. Dr. Foxx, great to see you. We have been talking about this work a long time, the Thurgood Marshall College Fund, because I think the Parent Plus loan, to use the term "predatory," as that program currently works is an understatement.

We have seen—I understand access and the importance, particularly in the graduate school of Graduate Plus type programs, and one to help diversify our Nation's workforce. The flip side is that we know that on the employment side people show up with $150,000 of debt and an undergraduate degree in art, or communications, whatever it is.

They simply cannot focus on their work because they are working two jobs. It is not at all unusual to find someone who is under that kind of debt load from the undergraduate debt load, and my gosh, if they went to go get a master's degree, and those students simply cannot perform, so they are working 40 hours with us, 30 hours in the evening with Uber, and then they come back to us, and they are not their best.

We are therefore, not getting the return on our investment. We then fire them, and it is a vicious cycle. It is not about on the front end, well intended, I am certain the policy, but in the end what it has done has made it very difficult for employers to retain high-quality people and to see the productivity and efficiency that we need.

Mrs. FOXX. Thank you. Ms. Neily, 2 weeks ago I introduced H.R. 650, the Family Rights and Responsibilities Act. This legislation affirms the fundamental right that parents have to direct the education and upbringing of their children before interfering in parental educational choices.

This bill requires the Federal Government to prove a compelling government interest. In your experience, does the Department of Education know a child's needs better than parents do?

Mrs. NEILY. Absolutely not. Parents know what is going on. They know what their children's needs are, what their children's education style are, and so to the extent where parents are able to determine an education, institution or values that comport with what they want, as opposed to what a bureaucrat in Washington wants, I think it is so much the better, so thank you.

Mrs. FOXX. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I yield back.

Chairman WALBERG. I think the gentlelady. I now recognize the conservative conscience from Wisconsin, Mr. Grothman.

Mr. GROTHMAN. Okay. A couple things. First of all, we are going to look at college because we have kind of covered everything today. At the University of Wisconsin in 1993, there were 26,000 full-time employees, OK. Ten years later the number of full-time employees went up from 26,000 to 33,000, but the number of faculty fell from about 7,200 to 5,800.

There was a dramatic cut in the number of faculty and a dramatic increase in the number of what I will call administrative staff, something that was not teaching. Can you comment on that to me at all? I believe that is a nationwide trend, and that is why I want to bring it up because we always talk about cost of education.

It seems to me, I mean I have talked to some people in the universities, they try to give me honest answers, but what is the deal on that? Does somebody want to comment on this?

Mr. COOPER. America's universities absolutely have a spending problem. U.S. universities and colleges spend more per student than any other large county in the developed world. The University of Wisconsin is just one example.

Mr. GROTHMAN. Okay. Well, that is good. I will give you another question. Different countries start educating their students formally at different ages, and in America that could be 5 years old, can be 6 years old, whatever, but there is no question that some countries, and I think countries like Finland or Singapore, they start a formal education later, and thereby have a higher percentage of the children with their parents.

Do you know why we are—can you comment on this idea, the American idea of in cost trying to get the children away from their parents earlier and earlier, which I hear a lot of some advocates for, as opposed to doing it in other countries where we have more confidence in the parents. Do you have some comment on that?

Mrs. NELSON. Is that an open question?

Mr. GROTHMAN. Yes. Well, I just want a comment on that, why maybe we do not try to—since we are supposed to be a free country here. Why do we not emulate counties like Israel, I am sorry, emulate countries like Finland and Singapore where, you know, the parents are primarily responsible for the children at a younger age?

Mrs. NELSON. Well, studies have shown that universal pre-K has boosted the ability of students to succeed in every context. If you invest in pre-K, you see the dividends returned at every other step of the education system. The other countries that you refer to that enable parents to stay with their children longer also have social supports for those families.

They have a social safety net. They have other income that they provide for families in order to sustain their economic wherewithal when they are unable to work because they are taking care of their children.

Mr. GROTHMAN. Right. I am familiar with the Brookings Institution's study on Head Start, and it showed it was not that good. Do any of the other three of you have an opinion on getting kids in a formal setting at a younger age?

Mrs. NEILY. I think the devil is in the details on how we execute on some of these things. The programs that we are seeing, the pervasive, poisonous ideology in K to 12 schools, if we start that even earlier at younger ages, 3, 4 years old, and we start to teach children to identify themselves and others on the basis of race, sex, or other amenable characteristics I think it really continues to exploit the power dynamic between an adult and a child.

To the extent where parents want to keep their children home, I think universal pre-K really removes that choice from parents, and that is something that I oppose.

Mr. TAYLOR. What I oppose though is that what we know is that we have a problem keeping women in the workforce. They disproportionately are responsible for early childcare. To the extent that is an opportunity for a woman to go back to work who wants to go back to work, and this is not exclusively women, but disproportionately women, we can do that by allowing them to ensure they have high-quality care for their children that is also education.

Mr. GROTHMAN. Okay. Well, thank you my conservative witnesses. Next question I have for you, I was talking to some school superintendents recently, and they felt one of the reasons that they were struggling in school to provide a good education is a lot of the children come from difficult family backgrounds.

They felt there was a difference in the children that had a stable, two parent thing. Not that single parents do a fantastic job in many cases, a fantastic job, but nevertheless they felt overall they were able to do a better job with the kids with both parents there.

Could you comment on that? Is that we have a decline in America in the number of kids with both mom and dad at home? It seems to hurt the outcomes of the education system. Is that true?

Mrs. NEILY. Ian Rowe, at the American Enterprise Institute has done terrific research on this, on the success sequence of that children obviously do better with two parent households. To the extent where we see programs in school that encourage the disruption of——

Mr. GROTHMAN. I will give you one more question.

Chairman WALBERG. The gentleman's time is expired. We will have to get the question answered in writing.

Mr. GROTHMAN. Well, I will let you finish the question then, rather than jump in, finish it.

Mrs. NEILY. There are programs in schools right now, Black Lives Matter at School Week that prioritize the disruption of the western prescribed nuclear family. That would be a two-parent household. There will be things like that, and so when students are learning and being taught lessons like that, I think it is a negative.

Mr. GROTHMAN. Thank you.

Chairman WALBERG. The gentleman's time has expired. Now I recognize my friend and the Ranking Member, Mr. Scott from Virginia, for his questioning.

Mr. SCOTT. Thank you. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Ms. Neily, should parents always have the right to know things about their children, even if there is credible evidence that the child will be endangered if the parents get that information?

Mrs. NEILY. Education officials are mandatory reporters, and so if the school official believed that a child is in danger, they are obligated to report that to Child Protective Services. The CPS process is onerous, but there is due process built into it, and it is not a school official making a unilateral decision about a parent's——

Mr. SCOTT. Should the parent always know?

Mrs. NEILY. A parent should know if, unless a school has determined that they are harmful, or that they are in harm, but that should be referred to CPS, not made unilaterally.

Mr. SCOTT. Should the parents have veto power over the curriculum?

Mrs. NEILY. Parents should have the choice to determine an educational setting that works for their child. If a parent decides that a public school is not providing the values or the quality of education they want, then they should be able to find other alternatives.

Rich families can already, poor families may not.

Mr. SCOTT. Should parents in public schools have veto power over the curriculum?

Mrs. NEILY. Parents should have access to their curriculum so they should know whether this is a good fit for them or not. That is a problem that accessing that information has been problematic from coast to coast.

Mr. SCOTT. They should not have veto power over——

Mrs. NEILY. I did not say that. I said they should at least have awareness of what that is.

Mr. SCOTT. I was asking the question. You did not say it, that is right. Should they have veto power over the curriculum?

Mrs. NEILY. I have never seen or heard of a school district where a parent has tried to exercise veto power over what a curriculum is. They would like access to it, and they have been——

Mr. SCOTT. Ms. Nelson, is there evidence that increases in vouchers in public—in private education leads to segregation?

Mrs. NELSON. Yes. There is evidence that the increase in voucher use, voucher scams, siphons money from the public education system, and leaves some of the children who are most vulnerable without adequate resources. We know that those children are disproportionately black, Latino, low income and people with learning disabilities.

Mr. SCOTT. Do you have—I think you referred to studies that showed that increased diversity in the school leads to increased student achievement?

Mrs. NELSON. Yes. There are studies that show that increases in diversity, equity and inclusion create a more hospitable environment for learning, that they increase higher graduation rates, they improve critical thinking, better problem solving ability, increased student satisfaction and motivation, improve self-confidence.

There are a multitude of benefits to having a more inclusive learning environment.

Mr. SCOTT. Is there any evidence that public education is enhanced by school choice?

Mrs. NELSON. No. There is not if you define school choice by the voucher scam programs that are being pedaled. School choice exists within our public education school system. There are many oppor-

tunities for students to learn in different ways that can be accommodated by strengthening our public education school system without vouchers.

Mr. SCOTT. What would the elimination of Title I do to equitable educational opportunities?

Mrs. NELSON. It would be absolutely devastating. There are many students who come from low-income families who rely on Title I funding, who rely on school lunch programs, free breakfast programs, and other ways to nourish them, so that they can nourish their minds during the school day.

Mr. SCOTT. What problems do we need to rationally address in public education?

Mrs. NELSON. We need to address real problems, not fictional, or anecdotal issues that people are using to alarm parents across the country. What is really plaquing our schools is inequitable funding.

There is not an argument that we necessarily need to pour more dollars. We need to take dollars away from things like funding prisons where we fund prison populations at a rate of three times the amount that we fund per capital pupil investments.

Mr. SCOTT. That is a historically recent phenomenon.

Mrs. NELSON. Yes, yes, and almost every person who spoke today lauding their education system is spending nearly three times the amount on prisoners than they are on actual students. We also know that racial segregation in our schools has actually increased in the past 30 years because of some of the reasons I have mentioned earlier in my testimony.

Mr. SCOTT. Let me ask Mr. Taylor a question. Is there inherent value that cannot be instantaneously monetized in a liberal arts education?

Mr. TAYLOR. Absolutely, yes.

Mr. SCOTT. How do you improve access to that opportunity, or should we just leave that opportunity to those that could afford it?

Mr. TAYLOR. No. Absolutely not. In fact, what we have found, especially at some of our more premium and premier employers, many of the high-end professional search firms, law firms, et cetera, is that we find people with degrees in anthropology, liberal arts music, art, are incredibly critical thinkers.

They learn to work with others, and they are very innovative and creative, so we see lots of advantage to the traditional undergraduate education, liberal education.

Mr. SCOTT. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman WALBERG. I thank the gentleman. Now I would like to recognize the Ranking Member for his closing remarks.

Mr. SCOTT. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I think we have heard a lot about school choice, it is really a false choice, it just leads to separate and unequal schools. I thought we had gotten away from that about 60, 70 years ago. We need to focus on improving education, but for the vast majority of the students that will be attending public schools.

We need to also make sure that higher education, that people who have access to higher education. I think everybody can agree that it is not affordable right now. When people calculate, Mr. Cooper, has suggested that people are calculating it is not worth it. That is their solution to that would be not to—to tell people not

to go. The solution to that would be make it more affordable, so that everybody can have that opportunity.

As Mr. Taylor mentioned, whether it is technically aligned with a particular job or not, because the liberal arts degree has inherent value. There are job training programs. We have got programs in WIOA, we need to continue working on that. I think we are on the right track on that, but access to higher education is going to be a challenge, and we just cannot allow the present situation that worked 30–40 years ago.

If any college—virtually any college you wanted to go to, you could afford to go to, Pell Grant covered 80 percent of the costs of going to the State college. With a summer job and 15 hours a week during the school year, you could work your way through college and come out with no debt.

Now, as it has been suggested, you work 40 hours a week and still cannot come out of college without crushing debt. We have challenges in higher education, but the numbers and the results of where we are in public K through 12, obviously suggests that we need to make significant improvements, but dismantling the public education system is not the right course.

Thank you for holding the hearing, and I yield back.

Chairman WALBERG. I thank the gentleman, and I thank the witnesses for what you have added to our hearing today because it would not be a hearing without witnesses, but credible witnesses who can speak from different viewpoints, and I think that is the same with this Committee here.

I think I could safely assume that this Committee agree on the basics of education and workforce. We have to have an educated workforce, and that comes from good educational institutions that are achieving, that are making it. I would think that the majority—I know for myself, I do not oppose public education.

I do not want to decimate public education. My first 13 years of education was in public education, and a mother who was a public school teacher, and several aunts, and a daughter-in-law, and all in public education. I think we also ought to be able to agree that we have problems.

Those problems are opportunities. At this point in time, I think we can agree that we are not achieving the excellence that we want to achieve. Can I safely say that? IDEA funding is not funded completely. We know that. The Department of Education is responsible for that.

NAEP scores are going down. Antisemitism and anti-Americanism has put up its ugly head on our higher education institutions, some very elite higher education institutions as well. You know, after spending 1 trillion dollars since the inception of the Department of Education, we are still failing. We have the opportunity to at least work toward solutions, and that will cause great attention and some heat and some disagreement.

I think it is important at this time that we jealously—we jealously, and that is a word I want to use, steward our Article I authorities, but that also includes not fearing outside influences up to and including the President of the United States, and whoever he has as advisors and assistants to find out what he would conclude is what we need.

We can use that as a goad to do even better, whether we agree or disagree. I happen to agree that this Committee will work on finding solutions within our Article I authorities and powers and responsibilities, and we better not let down on that. Student, parents, teachers are our No. 1 priority in the educational system, correct?

Then the workforce is what we have got to point our eyes toward, whatever area of workforce there is. They need to be the best educated and prepared possible. Expressing our diversity bestwill be in the context of merit and excellence, and how we achieve that in the end is important.

We have that opportunity on this Committee to help determine where we go. Yes, we want more choice on our side of the aisle, and I am not so sure that all of our colleagues on the other side would disagree with that. It is what choice it is, but we want more choice, and we want the same choice that billionaires already have.

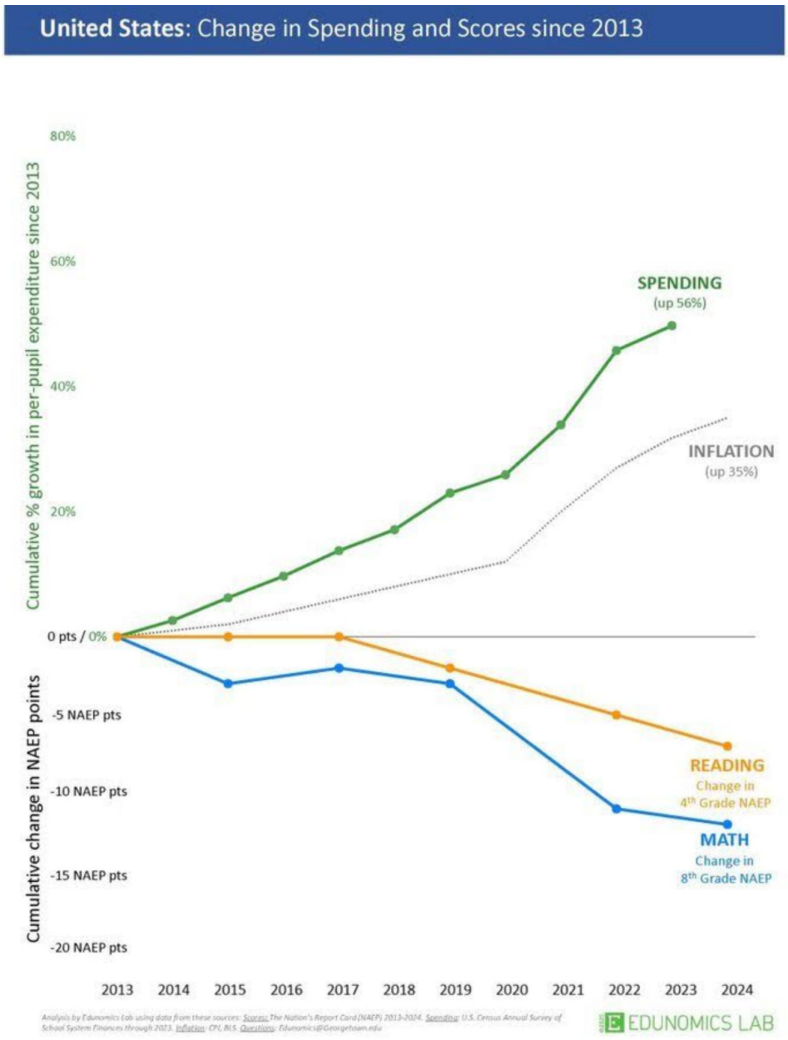
I think I am right on that one. You throw out things that this is going to give choice to billionaires. No, they have it already. They have the money to pay for it, and they do that. We have to find a way to give choice to everybody as much as humanly possible.

I believe we can agree on our desire to improve education opportunity for all, and that is where I want us to focus from this first hearing on. I wait with expectation of how we can work together, and how we can—we can work in a creative tension, to force our ideas, all of our ideas, to be better in the outcome of it all.

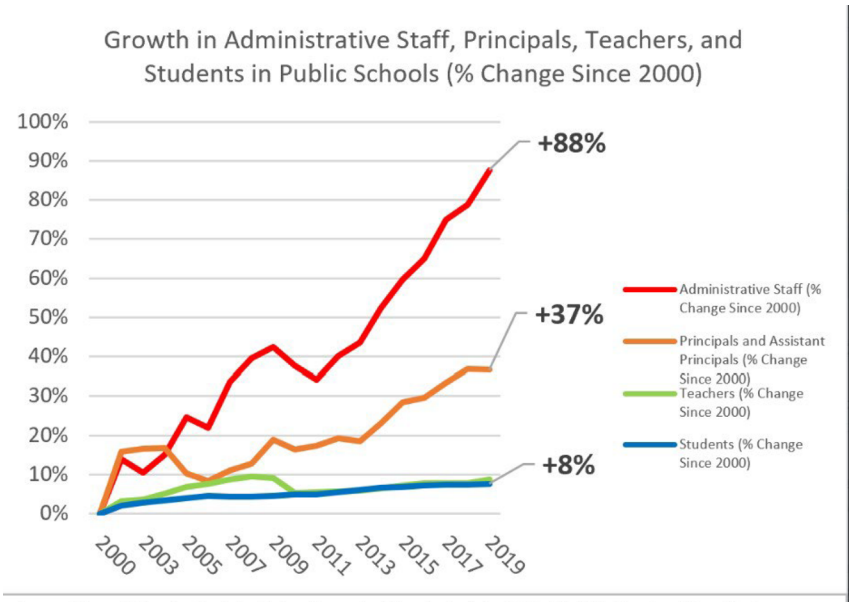
I think a lot, if not all has been said today, and right now all have said it, so if there are no further business to be conducted here, and without objection, the Committee stands adjourned.

[Whereupon, at 1:07 p.m., the Committee was adjourned.]

[Additional submissions from Rep. Kiley follows:]

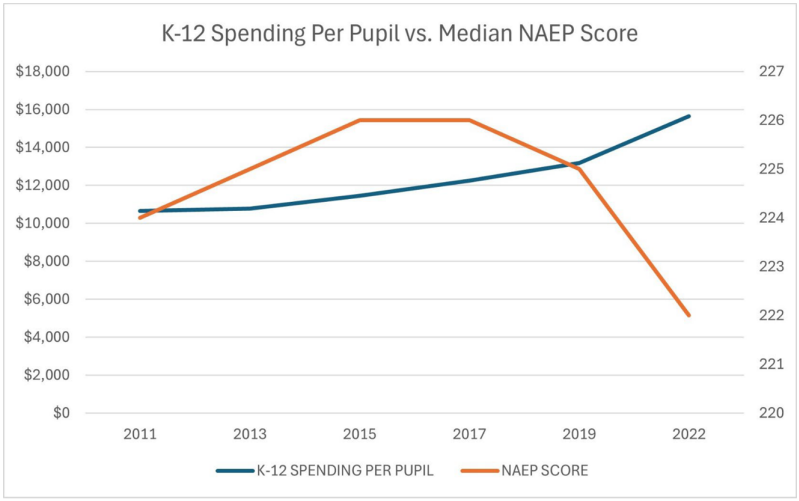


[Additional submissions from Rep. Onder follows:]



Sources: Digest of Education Statistics. National Center for Education Statistics. Table 213.10.Staff employed in public elementary and secondary school systems, by type of assignment: Selected years, 1949-50 through fall 2019. Retrieved from https://nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/d21/tables/dt21_213.10.asp

Digest of Education Statistics. National Center for Education Statistics. Table 203.10.Enrollment in public elementary and secondary schools, by level and grade: Selected years, fall 1980 through fall 2030. Retrieved from https://nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/d21/tables/dt21_203.10.asp



[Questions and responses submitted for the record by Mrs. Janai Nelson follows:]

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February 26, 2025

Mrs. Janai Nelson
President & Director-Counsel, NAACP Legal Defense Fund
40 Rector Street
New York, New York 10006

Dear Mrs. Nelson,

Thank you again for testifying at the February 5, 2025, Committee on Education and Workforce hearing titled "The State of American Education." Enclosed are additional questions submitted by Committee members following the hearing. Please provide a written response no later than March 19, 2025, for inclusion in the hearing record. Responses should be sent to Isaiah Knox (isaiah.knox@mail.house.gov) of the Committee staff; he can also be contacted at (202) 731-7894.

We appreciate your contribution to the work of the Committee.

Sincerely,

Tim Walberg
Chairman

Representative Mark DeSaulnier (D-CA)

1) As you know, Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act prohibits discrimination on the basis of disability in programs receiving federal funding. The Department of Education plays an important role in both enforcing that landmark law and also helping colleges and universities understand their responsibility to provide accommodations to students with disabilities. This role is more important than ever since an estimated 21% of all college students had a disability in 2020, up from 11% in 2004.

   a) Can you please elaborate on the role that the Department of Education plays in helping colleges meet the needs of students with disabilities?

2) I am also the proud author of the Improving Access to Higher Education Act, which would increase college accessibility and completion for students with disabilities. Included as part of the Roadmap to College Student Success, my bill would ensure that students with disabilities have the tools and support they need to be successful in higher education.

   a) Can you please explain some of the challenges that students with disabilities face in transitioning to higher education?

Representative Haley Stevens (D-MI)

1) Last week, our nation's report card was released, and it paints a mixed picture of our education system nearly five years after the pandemic. While there is some encouraging news—particularly in math, where fourth-graders showed modest gains—overall, the majority of students in both math and reading are still below pre-pandemic levels.

   Reading scores, especially for eighth-graders, have reached historic lows, and troublingly, many of these declines began before COVID-19. This raises the question: why were students struggling even before the pandemic, and what steps do we need to take to address these systemic issues?

   The data also underscores the persistent gap between wealthier students and their peers from lower-income backgrounds, showing that students with more access to quality educational resources perform better.

   In the midst of this landscape, I can think of no worse time than now to abolish the Department of Education as we know it. There are students out there struggling and the Trump Administration, with the seeming support of my Republican colleagues, are looking to strip resources away from those very students.

   I want to be clear; Congress created the Department of Education. President Trump does not have the legal authority to unilaterally shutter it. There are some on the other side of the aisle who seem eager to cede even more Congressional authority to this President, but I for one will not stand by while support for our nation's students is gutted.

   We've seen a troubling and growing disparity between high and low performing students emerge in recent years. Vulnerable students need more support than ever, yet we are hearing reliable media reports that the Trump Administration intends to abolish the Department of Education in its entirety.

   a) Ms. Nelson, can you detail just some of the ways doing away with the Department of Education would exacerbate existing learning gaps and put our nation's youth at a disadvantage?

   b) What message would such a destructive action send to public educators, parents, and students around the country?

   c) Unfortunately, access to quality education still varies greatly by race, income, location, and a host of other factors. How would destroying the Department of Education as we know it limit our ability to raise up students currently falling behind?

2) I'd like to narrow in on to Title I funding and the teacher workforce. We've hammered home the decline in educational outcomes since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic. Low-income

students and the public schools that serve them need all the resources available to them in this moment.

a) How does Title I funding help bolster the nation's educator workforce?

b) A recent Center for American Progress report estimated that the proposal to phase out Title I in Project 2025 would result in the loss of over 5% of teaching workforce. Can parents, students, and public schools afford to lose any teachers at this moment, let alone 5% of them?

c) What would be the result of a complete recission of Title I? Which students and schools would be most affected?

3) Finally, I hope you'll bear with me as I list some of the policy work and funding the Department of Education provides: $18 billion for educating children from low income families, $15 billion for special education programs for children with disabilities **at no cost to parents**, $4 billion for grants to help adults with disabilities find jobs, $2 billion for career and technical education in high schools, community colleges, and adult education programs, and billions of dollars for student loans and aid for kids seeking the American dream through a college education.

a) Ms. Nelson, in your expert opinion, is it a good idea to gut all or most of that funding as the President has proposed?

House Committee on Education & Workforce
The State of American Education
March 19, 2024
Questions for the Record
Janai S. Nelson

Representative Mark DeSaulnier (D-CA)

1) **Can you please elaborate on the role that the Department of Education plays in helping colleges meet the needs of students with disabilities?**

Representative DeSaulnier, thank you for the opportunity to expand on my testimony regarding the vital role the Department of Education plays in supporting students with disabilities. For over 45 years, the Department of Education has played an indispensable role in advancing educational equity and safeguarding students' civil rights. Since the House Committee on Education & Workforce's hearing on the State of American Education on February 5, 2025, Education Secretary McMahon announced the unprecedented plan to eliminate staff at the Department of Education (ED), "impacting nearly 50% of the Department's workforce."[1] This decision also included the closure of the Office of Civil Rights (OCR) offices across the country including in Boston, Chicago, Cleveland, Dallas, New York, Philadelphia and San Francisco. These regional offices were on the front lines of investigating complaints of alleged discrimination in school districts across the country.[2]

The Department of Education plays a critical role in helping colleges meet the needs of students with disabilities through the enforcement of federal disability laws, oversight and compliance, the issuance of guidance, and administration of grants to support programs.[3] The impact of the decision to eliminate staff and close offices cannot be understated – funds to carry out Congressionally-mandated duties are now effectively impounded, and the Trump administration has abdicated its responsibility to investigate the thousands of discrimination complaints still pending with OCR. [4] Moreover, this attack on ED serves to circumvent the required Congressional approval to dissolve the federal agency. This administration's decision is an attempt to weaken federal civil rights enforcement and eliminate programs and resources vital to the agency's mission of providing all students, including Black students, with equal

[1] Press Release, U.S. Department of Education Initiates Reduction in Force, U.S. Dept. Ed., Mar. 11, 2025, https://www.ed.gov/about/news/press-release/us-department-of-education-initiates-reduction-force.

[2] Jodi S. Cohen and Jennifer Smith Richards, *Massive Layoffs at the Department of Education Erode Its Civil Rights Division*, PROPUBLICA (Mar. 12, 2025), https://www.propublica.org/article/education-department-civil-rights-division-eroded-by-massive-layoffs.

[3] U.S. GOV'T ACCOUNTABILITY OFF., GAO-24-105614, *HIGHER EDUCATION: Education Could Improve Information on Accommodations for Students with Disabilities* (2024).

[4] Jodi S. Cohen and Jennifer Smith Richards, *Massive Layoffs at the Department of Education Erode Its Civil Rights Division*, PROPUBLICA (Mar. 12, 2025), https://www.propublica.org/article/education-department-civil-rights-division-eroded-by-massive-layoffs.

educational opportunities. Congress must take action to ensure that this administration does not completely abdicate its role in civil rights enforcement.

Equal access to higher education for students with disabilities is mandated under The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 (Section 504).[5] Institutions of higher education are responsible for fulfilling the social and legal promise of disability rights laws.[6] In this regard, ED plays a pivotal role for students.

The Office for Civil Rights' Enforcement Actions

OCR protects the rights of all students with disabilities by investigating complaints alleging discrimination that arise under federal disability law and issuing guidance to assist schools in complying with federal anti-discrimination laws.[7] From 2012 to 2021, OCR has processed 1,400 disability related complaints on average per year against postsecondary institutions.[8] Following investigations by OCR staff, OCR typically reaches and monitors an agreement with the institution to return the institution back into compliance with federal anti-discrimination laws and prevent future violations.[9] OCR also issues guidance to all institutions to instruct them on broad trends and emerging issues observed by OCR to guard against and eliminate discrimination against students with disabilities.[10]

Funding Support Programs

ED also provides grant funding to schools and organizations to help students with disabilities navigate and graduate from college.[11] Collectively, these grants funded upwards of about $30 million in programming in the fiscal year 2022.[12] For example, ED grants support to TRIO Student Support Services which funds programs including tutoring, advice of course selection, and assistance in applying for financial aid.[13] Likewise, the Transition Programs for Students with Intellectual Disabilities into Higher Education (TPSID) grants supports institutions of higher education in creating or expanding high-quality, inclusive, and comprehensive model transition and postsecondary education programs for students with intellectual disabilities.[14]

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[5] Americans With Disabilities Act of 1990, 42 U.S.C. § 12101 (1990); 29 U.S.C. § 794.

[6] Rob Gould et al., *Higher Education and the ADA: An ADA Knowledge Translation Center Research Brief*, ADA NATIONAL NETWORK (2019), https://adata.org/research_brief/higher-education-and-ada.

[7] *Id.* at 21.

[8] *Id.* at 21-22.

[9] *Id.*

[10] *Id.*

[11] U.S. GOV'T ACCOUNTABILITY OFF., GAO-23-105551, *Department of Education: Additional Data Collection Would Help Assess the Performance of a Program Supporting College Students with Disabilities* (2023).

[12] U.S. GOV'T ACCOUNTABILITY OFF., *supra* note 3.

[13] *Id.*

[14] U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION, *Fiscal Year 2025 Budget Summary*, https://www.ed.gov/sites/ed/files/about/overview/budget/budget25/summary/25summary.pdf.

Finally, the National Center for Information and Technical Support for Postsecondary Students with Disabilities is supported through ED and maintains an online information "clearinghouse" and resource library which provides information for current and future students with disabilities.[15]

2) Can you please explain some of the challenges that students with disabilities face in transitioning to higher education?

Transitioning from high school to higher education can be difficult for any student and can present even more challenges for students with disabilities.[16] Students with disabilities are less likely to graduate from college than those without disabilities and have been found to achieve slightly lower grade point averages as well.[17] As explained below, civil rights protections for students with disabilities are essential for their success.

Civil Rights Framework for Students with Disabilities in Higher Education

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) guarantees a free and appropriate education for students with disabilities in K-12 public education. However, IDEA does not apply to higher education; therefore, institutions are not required to provide, for example, individualized education to a student with a disability.[18] Rather, the ADA and Section 504 provide the anti-discrimination framework for students with disabilities in higher education.[19] The transition from IDEA to Section 504 and the ADA can leave students with disabilities entering higher education without the knowledge necessary to navigate the unfamiliar statutory framework to receive proper accommodations (i.e., including providing acceptable documentation and requesting the type of accommodation needed in the university setting).[20] Where K-12 public schools are obligated to seek out and identify students with disabilities, students with disabilities have the burden to disclose their disability to university officials and professors in the higher education context.[21] Further, the process for establishing a disability might require a new evaluation which presents additional cost incurred by the student that can range from $1,000 to over $3,000.[22] Students who lack the proper documentation may experience delay in obtaining the accommodations that they seek.

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[15] U.S. GOV'T ACCOUNTABILITY OFF., *supra* note 3.

[16] Suzanne Eckes and Theresa Ochoa, *Students with Disabilities: Transitioning from High School to Higher Education*, AMERICAN SECONDARY EDUCATION, 33 6-20 (2005); U.S. GOV'T ACCOUNTABILITY OFF., GAO-24-105614, *HIGHER EDUCATION: Education Could Improve Information on Accommodations for Students with Disabilities* (2024).

[17] *Id.*

[18] *Id.*

[19] *Id.*

[20] Christos Kelepouris, *Transitioning Students with Disabilities into Higher Education*, 2014 BYU EDUC. & L.J. 27, 36 (2014).

[21] *Id.* at 29-30; Faculty Guide: Roles and Responsibilities, Texas A&M U. Disability Resources, https://disability.tamu.edu/facultyguide/roles/.

[22] *Id.* at 29-30; U.S. GOV'T ACCOUNTABILITY OFF., *supra* note 3.

Accommodations for Students with Disabilities in Higher Education

Universities are required to make "academic adjustments" to reasonably accommodate a student which can include recorded lectures, extended exam time, and course substitutions.[23] Within accommodations, there are several barriers to students with disabilities including: lack of faculty familiarity with federal regulations, "ambivalent attitudes" about supporting students with disabilities, and the misperception of accommodations as special treatment rather than equal access.[24] Further, compared to K-12 public education where teachers can receive training on working with students with disabilities, faculty in higher education are often unfamiliar with appropriately accommodating students, leading to students experiencing resistance to accommodations.[25]

Disability Services in Higher Education

In higher education, the responsibility for seeking out services and accessibility considerations falls onto students rather than the university.[26] In many cases this responsibility falls on a student who is no more than nineteen years old, individuals whose brains are still developing in ways not yet equip to manage adult level duties.[27] This shift in responsibility can be a challenge for students with disabilities who exiting high school without knowledge of their rights to obtain and maintain educational accommodations in higher education.[28] Disability supports services, often housed in the university's diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility offices, can also fail to comprehensively resource and address the needs of disabled students.[29] These support services often are not facilitated to expand beyond the narrow interpretation of equal access to address campus level social barriers and foster social inclusion.[30]

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[23] Suzanne Eckes and Theresa Ochoa, *Students with Disabilities: Transitioning from High School to Higher Education*, 33 AMERICAN SECONDARY EDUCATION, 6-20, (2005).

[24] Gould, *supra* note 6.

[25] Kelepouris, *supra* note 20, at 32-36; U.S. GOV'T ACCOUNTABILITY OFF., *supra* note 3.

[26] Gould, *supra* note 6; U.S. GOV'T ACCOUNTABILITY OFF., *supra* note 3.

[27] The Teen Brain: 7 Things to Know, National Institute of Mental Health, https://www.nimh.nih.gov/health/publications/the-teen-brain-7-things-to-know#:~:text=Although%20the%20brain%20stops%20growing,the%20last%20parts%20to%20mature.

[28] *Id.*

[29] David Leake et al., *Higher Education and Disability: Past and Future of Underrepresented Populations*, 27 JOURNAL OF POSTSECONDARY EDUCATION AND DISABILITY 4, 404 (2014).

[30] *Id.*

Representative Haley Stevens (D-MI)

1) **Ms. Nelson, can you detail just some of the ways doing away with the Department of Education would exacerbate existing learning gaps and put our nation's youth at a disadvantage?**

Representative Stevens, thank you for the opportunity to expand on my testimony regarding the vital role the Department of Education plays in closing the learning gap, enforcing federal civil rights laws, and supporting low-income students and their educators via Title I funding. ED's role is crucial to advance policies and practices that eliminate racial disparities and strengthen state and local compliance with federal civil rights laws, including Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972, Section 504, and Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990. For decades, "states' rights" has been weaponized to shield bad actors from accountability for maintaining segregated, inequitable public schools. Abolishing ED will place Black students, and other students for whom the federal government is often the last line of defense, at greater risk of being denied the opportunity to receive a high-quality education in diverse classrooms with a positive school climate and rigorous academic instruction.

Civil Rights Enforcement

As mentioned above, ED and OCR are critical to the enforcement of this nation's federal anti-discrimination laws. These laws mandate equal access to education no matter the student's race, ethnicity, color, sex, gender, sexual orientation, English-learner status, and disability. Without equal access to education – and more plainly, the ability of students to learn free from discrimination, learning gaps will continue to expand. During Fiscal Year 2024 alone, OCR received nearly 23,000 complaints overall— a new record high.[31] Of those complaints, 37% (8,457) alleged disability discrimination and 19% (4,307) contained allegations of discrimination on the basis of race, color, or national origin. Any federal action to dismantle or defund OCR and eliminate enforcement tools will significantly hinder the ability of the federal government to provide remedies to students who have been impacted by various forms of systemic oppression, harassment, and discrimination. Additionally, efforts to weaken or terminate the ability of ED to investigate and resolve Title VI complaints based on disparate impact will significantly harm Black students and will exacerbate existing inequities for other students of color, including Latino, Asian American and Native American students, exacerbating learning gaps.

Federal Funding to Support Equal Access to Education for Low-Income Students

In a similar way, ED disburses billions in funding for school districts and school programs to support equal access to education for all students in this country. Without this funding low-income students, including those in rural, urban and inner-ring suburban

[31] U.S. Dep't of Educ., Off. for C.R., 2024 Fiscal Year Annual Report 8 (2024), https://www.ed.gov/media/document/ocr-report-president-and-secretary-of-education-2024.

communities, who are entitled to Title I funding will learn in even less-resourced schools that will drive down academic learning. Freezes or restrictions in Title I funding will disparately impact low-income students who are disproportionately Black. During the 2018-2019 academic year, Black schoolchildren were more likely than any other racial group to attend a Title I public school, with approximately seventy percent of Black public-school students in Title I districts and schools.[32]

2) **What message would such a destructive action send to public educators, parents, and students around the country?**

Dismantling the Department of Education will send a clear message to public educators, parents, and students across the country – discrimination will go uninvestigated and severely under-resourced public schools will be the default. Indeed, some states have already rolled back anti-discrimination policies, removing protected classes and examples from those policies. Without federal oversight, students in these states, like Texas, will have their access to education denied due to harassment and discrimination. Additionally, public schools will not be able to afford teachers and students will need to learn in more and more crowded classrooms. Even today, hardworking teachers around the country already supplement school needs out of their own pockets.[33] Wealthy families will have the resources to withdraw from public schools and send their children to private ones. However, the vast majority of Black and Hispanic families will not be able to afford the luxury of a private school and be forced to send their children to public schools where equal access to education will be denied.

3) **Unfortunately, access to quality education still varies greatly by race, income, location, and a host of other factors. How would destroying the Department of Education as we know it limit our ability to raise up students currently falling behind?**

The Department of Education is foremost a civil rights agency. Longstanding challenges in our country's education system were made worse by the pandemic. Key ways to combat COVID-19's disruption in learning for Black students are targeted federal funding and data-driven policy reform. Both of these tools are housed within ED and are functions that ED already performs. For example, Congress could expand grant programs to fund school desegregation efforts, hire and train more Black educators, and encourage the adoption of culturally inclusive curricula in public education. None of this will be possible if the Department of Education is dismantled.

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[32] Calculated using data points from: *Children in Title I Schools by Race and Ethnicity in United States,* Kids Count Data Ctr., Annie E. Casey Found, https://datacenter.aecf.org/data/tables/8418-children-in-title-i-schools-by-race-and-ethnicity?loc=1&loct=1#detailed/1/any/false/1696/167,168,133,3,185,107/17042 (last visited Mar. 18, 2025); Nat'l Ctr. for Educ. Stat., Instit. of Educ. Sci., U.S. Dep't of Educ., *Racial/Ethnic Enrollment in Public Schools* in the Condition of Educ. 2021 (2021), https://nces.ed.gov/programs/coe/pdf/2021/cge_508c.pdf.

[33] Amanda Litvinov, *Why Are Educators Still Buying Their Own School Supplies?*, National Ed. Assoc. (Aug. 31, 2023), https://www.nea.org/nea-today/all-news-articles/why-are-educators-still-buying-their-own-school-supplies.

4) How does Title I funding help bolster the nation's educator workforce?

Title I Supports Educator Retention

Across the country, Black students are more likely to attend schools that have high percentages of novice teachers, first year teachers, and uncertified teachers.[34] During the 2023-24 school year, every state in the country reported a teacher shortage in one or more subject area.[35] Title I schools see turnover rates that are nearly 50% greater than other schools.[36] These factors are even higher in schools with a larger population of students of color.[37] For example, from October 2022 to October 2023, schools with the greatest proportion of students experiencing poverty lost 29% of their teachers compared to 19% for schools with the lowest concentration of need.[38] When teachers move between schools within their districts, they are more likely to move to a school with a smaller proportion of students living in poverty than the school they left.[39] Due to poor working conditions and unmanageable workloads, teachers are leaving high-poverty schools at alarmingly high rates.[40]

Teachers in districts that have higher salary scales, who are better prepared, and feel most supported by their school leaders are least likely to leave their schools.[41] Title I funds are used to pay for teachers and various instructional support personnel, such as coaches, librarians, and social workers.[42] Title I provides necessary resources for districts to support and incentivize teachers in hard-to-staff schools that serve a higher percentage of low-income students, and Black students and other students of color.[43]

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[34] Sarah Mehrotra, et al., *Getting Black Students Better Access to Non-Novice Teachers*, ED. TRUST (2021), https://edtrust.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/09/Getting-Black-Students-Better-Access-to-Non-Novice-Teachers-December-2021.pdf.

[35] Weade James and Will Ragland, *Project 2025's Elimination of Title I Funding Would Hurt Students and Decimate Teaching Positions in Local Schools*, CENTER FOR AMERICAN PROGRESS, (Jul. 25, 2024).

[36] UNIVERSITY OF MASSACHUSETTS GLOBAL, *Teacher turnover: What you need to know and how you can curb the trend*, https://www.umassglobal.edu/news-and-events/blog/teacher-turnover.

[37] *Id.*

[38] ERSTRATEGIES, *Examining School-Level Teacher Turnover Trends from 2021 to 2023: A New Angle on a Pervasive Issue*, (Mar. 14, 2024).

[39] *Id.*

[40] James, *supra* note 35.

[41] Desiree Carver-Thomas and Linda Darling-Hammond, *Teacher Turnover: Why It Matters and What We Can Do About It*, LEARNING POLICY INSTITUTE (Aug. 2017).

[42] U.S. GOV'T ACCOUNTABILITY OFF., GAO-11-595, *Disadvantaged Students: School Districts Have Used Title I Funds Primarily to Support Instruction* (2011).

[43] James, *supra* note 35.

Title I Supports Professional Development and Classroom Management Support for Educators

Additionally, Title I funding is used to reduce teacher/student ratios and extend instructional time. Schools use Title I funding to provide professional development to teachers, including traditional workshop training and guidance on implementing the training they received into the classroom.[44] Specialized training such as workshops, conferences, and mentorship programs can help educators better support the needs of low-income students.[45] Title I funding has also been used to provide instructional materials to improve teaching effectiveness and job satisfaction for teachers.[46]

5) **A recent Center for American Progress report estimated that the proposal to phase out Title I in Project 2025 would result in the loss of over 5% of teaching workforce. Can parents, students, and public schools afford to lose any teachers at this moment, let alone 5% of them?**

Nationwide concern about a teacher shortage escalated during the COVID-19 pandemic, which exacerbated teacher workforce issues – an area that has experienced challenges for many years prior to the COVID-19 pandemic.[47] According to national data, the effects of the teacher shortage are most prevalent in the West, urban and rural communities, and in schools predominantly serving Black and Brown children.[48]

The state of our public education is in a critical moment, as younger students face larger learning gaps and academic recovery has been slow in foundational subjects.[49] In spring 2023, 56% of American fourth-graders were performing on grade level in math, compared to 69% in 2019.[50] A lack of sufficient and qualified teachers threatens students' ability to learn.[51] Teacher shortages result in lower student achievement, leaving schools to cancel courses due to vacancies, overcrowded classrooms, and underprepared teachers.[52] Additionally, higher rates of

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[44] U.S. GOV'T ACCOUNTABILITY OFF., *supra* note 16.

[45] Nneka McGee, *Let's Talk About Title: Federal Funding for U.S. School Districts*, AMERICAN COLLEGE OF EDUCATION, (Oct. 1, 2024).

[46] *Id.*

[47] LEARNING POLICY INSTITUTE, *Teacher Shortages Take Center Stage* (Feb. 9, 2022).

[48] U.S. GOVERNMENT ACCOUNTABILITY OFFICE, *Back to School—Obstacles to Educating K-12 Students Persist*, (Aug. 16, 2023).

[49] CENTER ON REINVENTING PUBLIC EDUCATION, *The State of the American Student*, (Fall 2024).

[50] HARVARD UNIVERSITY: CENTER FOR EDUCATION POLICY RESEARCH, *The scary truth about how far behind American kids have fallen*, (Sept. 20, 2024).

[51] Lucy C. Sorensen and Helen F. Ladd, *The Hidden Costs of Teacher Turnover*, THE CENTER FOR ANALYSIS OF LONGITUDINAL DATA IN EDUCATION RESEARCH, (2016).

[52] Emma Garcia and Elaine Weiss, *The teacher shortage is real, large and growing, and worse than we thought*, ECONOMIC POLICY INSTITUTE, (Mar. 26, 2019).

teacher turnover results in additional cost and time to the recruiting and training of new teachers.[53]

6) What would be the result of a complete recission of Title I? Which students and schools would be most affected?

Since 1965, and as part of President Lyndon B. Johnson's War on Poverty, Title I of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act has provided critical financial support to school districts with students who live below the poverty line.[54] Title I provides $18 billion annually to schools experiencing rates of high poverty. 37% of Black students and 38% of Hispanic students attend high poverty schools.[55] On average, ED provides about 13% of K-12 funding, however, this varies from state to state.[56] States that have more impoverished areas are more likely to be dependent on federal funds that are disbursed by ED.[57]

A recission of Title I would undermine the academic outcomes of nearly three million children by exacerbating the gaps between the "haves and have-nots" and have a disparate impact on Black and Hispanic students.[58] It would mean losing thousands of teachers and severely limiting children's access to quality education in school districts that need it most.[59] It would lead to increased program cuts and resource disparities that ultimately result in achievement gaps, increased dropout rates, lower college attendance rates, and eventually decreased economic mobility and higher rates of generational poverty.[60] Especially for Black children, losing Title I will impact learning with effects such as overcrowding in classrooms, less experienced teachers, and the loss of critical resources like school counselors and social workers.[61] Students need fully funded schools that provide safe and supportive learning environments to thrive.[62]

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[53] *Id.*

[54] Peter Greene, *Are Red States More Dependent on Federal Education Funding?*, FORBES (Jan. 24, 2025, 9:36AM).

[55] NATIONAL CENTER FOR EDUCATION STATISTICS, *Concentration of Public School Students Eligible for Free or Reduced Price Lunch*, (May 2023).

[56] *Id.*

[57] *Id.*

[58] Judith Browne Dianis, *Eliminating the Department of Education Would Hurt Black Students*, TIME, (Feb. 27, 2025 10:50AM), https://time.com/7261667/eliminating-department-of-education-resegregate-schools/.

[59] Tim Walker, *How Project 2025 Would Devastate Public Education*, NEATODAY, (Oct. 4, 2024).

[60] Dianis, *supra* note 58.

[61] Quintessa Williams, *Title I Funding in Limbo: What's at Stake for Black Students*, WORD IN BLACK, (Feb. 28, 2025).

[62] Dianis, *supra* note 58; Jennifer DePaoli and Jennifer McCombs, *Safe Schools, Thriving Students: What We Know About Creating Safe and Supportive Schools*, LEARNING POLICY INSTITUTE, (Sept. 27, 2023).

7) Ms. Nelson, in your expert opinion, is it a good idea to gut all or most of that funding as the President has proposed?

As noted above, cutting Title I funding, funding for special education programs for students with disabilities, funding to assist adults with disabilities find jobs, and funding for career and technical education will have disastrous consequences on the academic and economic outcomes for our students. Not only that, cutting this funding will effectively prevent equal access to education for many of this nation's most vulnerable students. School districts across the country are already critically and chronically underfunded – cuts to federal funding will lead to worse learning environments for all students and particularly, Black and Hispanic students and students with disabilities. For example, public schools will have fewer resources generally, fewer resources to support students with disabilities like counselors and advisors, fewer experienced teachers, fewer teachers who teach their expertise of study, fewer well-paid teachers, more teacher turnover, fewer textbooks for class, fewer books in the library (if a school library even exists), fewer heating in the winter, fewer cooling in the summer, fewer character building extracurricular activities and a lack of advanced curriculum including Advanced Placement and language courses.

[Questions and responses submitted for the record by Mr. Johnny C. Taylor, Jr. follows:]

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February 26, 2025

Mr. Johnny C. Taylor, Jr.
President and CEO, Society for Human Resource Management
1800 Duke Street
Alexandria, Virginia 22314

Dear Mr. Taylor,

Thank you again for testifying at the February 5, 2025, Committee on Education and Workforce hearing titled "The State of American Education." Enclosed are additional questions submitted by Committee members following the hearing. Please provide a written response no later than March 19, 2025, for inclusion in the hearing record. Responses should be sent to Isaiah Knox (isaiah.knox@mail.house.gov) of the Committee staff; he can also be contacted at (202) 731-7894.

We appreciate your contribution to the work of the Committee.

Sincerely,

Tim Walberg
Chairman

Representative Rick Allen (R-GA)

1) Mr. Taylor, how can the higher education community better support these efforts and adapt to the growing demand for skills-based career pathways?

2) Mr. Taylor, as employers across the country are struggling to recruit the skilled workforce they need, do you believe the limited amount of training currently provided through WIOA negatively affects employer awareness of the public workforce system and their willingness to engage?

Representative Burgess Owens (R-UT)

1) Mr. Taylor, in Utah, our state has been very successful for many years integrating our workforce system with other forms of state-provided assistance to better support workers in our state. We've had a waiver under WIOA to help make this happen. I introduced a bill last Congress called the *One Door to Work Act*, which would expand this flexibility to additional states. I intend to introduce that bill again this Congress. A version of it was included in the bipartisan, bicameral WIOA agreement that was reached late last year. Can you talk about how better integration of services at the state level can improve outcomes for workers?

Written Responses To Questions Received Regarding The February 5, 2025, Committee on Education and Workforce hearing titled "The State of American Education"

Representative Rick Allen (R-GA)

1) **Question:** Mr. Taylor, how can the higher education community better support these efforts and adapt to the growing demand for skills-based career pathways?

Answer:

The evolving landscape of work necessitates the continuous development of new skills. Higher education can play a significant role in supporting skills-based career pathways, and we're seeing these efforts already underway, particularly across community colleges. This involves working with employers to identify the specific skills most in demand and then building out programs and courses designed to provide competencies tied to those skills as well as the critical aspect of validating those competencies. This allows employers to more effectively deploy skills-based hiring initiatives.

According to SHRM's 2024 Talent Trends Survey, 1 in 4 organizations report that full-time regular positions they've hired for in the last 12 months have required new skills. While the top two reasons driving these new skill requirements are organizational growth (55%) and changing technology (51%), 3 in 4 report that it has been somewhat or very difficult to find qualified individuals with the new skills they need.

Groups such as the Association of Community College Trustees (ACCT) have been working with community colleges on ways to promote these best practices, including through this recent skills-based hiring playbook. However, community colleges aren't the only institutions able to play a role. Four-year colleges and universities can provide new pathways through validated micro-credentials and badges and other forms of competency efforts which often can go along with traditional degrees and offer expanded opportunities and job mobility for students.

2) **Question:** Mr. Taylor, as employers across the country are struggling to recruit the skilled workforce they need, do you believe the limited amount of training currently provided through WIOA negatively affects employer awareness of the public workforce system and their willingness to engage?

Answer:

Yes, and SHRM has advocated for changes to WIOA, as reflected in the bipartisan legislation passed in the House last Congress, which would have ensured that a majority of funds would be directed toward training. We also supported shifting a portion of H1B visa fees to support individual training accounts (ITA) for dislocated workers as another way in which WIOA can vastly expand training opportunities that will benefit not only more Americans but also employers who are struggling to find workers who have the skills necessary to fill open jobs.

If employers see this system meeting their needs, it is far more likely they will be invested in these programs.

Representative Burgess Owens (R-UT)

1) **Question:** Mr. Taylor, in Utah, our state has been very successful for many years integrating our workforce system with other forms of state-provided assistance to better support workers in our state. We've had a waiver under WIOA to help make this happen. I introduced a bill last Congress called the *One Door to Work Act*, which would expand this flexibility to additional states. I intend to introduce that bill again this Congress. A version of it was included in the bipartisan, bicameral WIOA agreement that was reached late last year. Can you talk about how better integration of services at the state level can improve outcomes for workers?

Answer:

As more and more states expand their efforts around workforce development, it is critical that WIOA can be used to leverage these investments effectively. Your legislation, which SHRM supported as part of the broader WIOA reauthorization, provides an excellent way for states to demonstrate ways in which they could help with the integration of these efforts to not only improve delivery – but also expand the number of individuals served and strive for much higher outcomes. We stand ready to work with you and other Members who have pushed for this flexibility and when enacted, help states integrate new and innovative strategies around an integrated and accountable workforce system.

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