

DEPARTMENTS OF LABOR, HEALTH AND
HUMAN SERVICES, EDUCATION, AND RELATED
AGENCIES APPROPRIATIONS FOR 2026

HEARINGS
BEFORE A
SUBCOMMITTEE OF THE
COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
ONE HUNDRED NINETEENTH CONGRESS
FIRST SESSION

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PART 1

	Page
Career-Ready Students: Innovations From Community Colleges and the Private Sector	1
Federal Investments in Elementary Education	83
Members' Day	155



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DEPARTMENTS OF LABOR, HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES, EDUCATION, AND RE- LATED AGENCIES APPROPRIATIONS FOR 2026

WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 12, 2025.

CAREER-READY STUDENTS: INNOVATIONS FROM COMMUNITY COLLEGES AND THE PRIVATE SECTOR

WITNESSES

PRESTON COOPER, SENIOR FELLOW, AMERICAN ENTERPRISE INSTITUTE

VICKI KAROLEWICS, PRESIDENT, WALLACE STATE COMMUNITY COLLEGE

MARY ALICE MCCARTHY, SENIOR DIRECTOR, CENTER ON EDUCATION & LABOR, NEW AMERICA

DENNIS PARKER, CONSULTANT, REGIONAL TALENT DEVELOPMENT, TOYOTA MOTOR NORTH AMERICA

Mr. ADERHOLT. Okay. Good morning. The subcommittee will come to order.

And I just want to thank all of our witnesses for being here today and coming to testify before our subcommittee, especially on the topic of career preparation and the importance of maximizing student employment and earnings potential. I look forward to hearing from each of you, from your different perspective, as to what you have identified that works for students and what we should bear in mind as we evaluate the programs in the subcommittee's jurisdiction.

And education, whether it be a 2-year, whether it be a 4-year, whether it be other credentials, it is likely to be one of the most large—or one of the largest investments an individual will make in their entire lifetime. In fact, it is an investment in themselves, and it is an investment in their future. Students rightfully expect to get a good return on their investment by moving up the economic ladder, finding a job in their chosen industry, and being able to provide for themselves and also to provide for their families.

It is no secret that college costs can be high, as I mentioned. Many of us have experienced this in our own families. And, each year, the Federal Government provides more than \$100 billion in grants and loans to help students pay for college.

The Congressional Budget Office, CBO, projected that the Federal Government would issue about \$90 billion in new student loans for 2025 alone, with roughly half going to undergraduates or

parents of undergraduates and the other half going to graduate students.

In total, 43 million borrowers currently have a total of \$1.6 trillion—yeah, \$1.6 trillion—in outstanding Federal student loans. About half of these borrowers owe less than \$20,000; about three-quarters, less than \$40,000. And these amounts are probably surprising to some because it is far below what sometimes is featured in the mainstream media.

Financing higher education, both for the Federal Government and the individual, is a significant investment. Borrowers expect it to be worth it on the other side of graduation with expanded job opportunities and also with higher pay. However, that is only one side of the equation. Taxpayers also deserve to know that their money has been well-spent. For 2025, Congressional Budget Office, the CBO, expects the government to lose 18 cents for every dollar it lends in 2025.

In the recent era of higher inflation, which is brought on by a lot of unnecessary Federal spending, students would benefit even more from cost-effective ways to obtain the knowledge and skills needed to advance in the labor market. College can and does translate to financial benefits that make their time and their money well worth it, but for too many it is not a universal experience.

And for many, completing a degree is a very big hurdle. According to the National Student Clearinghouse Research Center, the overall 6-year graduation rate in 2024 was about 61 percent. Well, it means nearly two in five students who enrolled in 2018 did not finish within 6 years. And by 8 years, the completion rate was only a few percentages higher. So I think you would agree that these rates are unacceptable, and we can and should be doing better for our students.

Right now, there are 8 million jobs unfilled in the country; however, that is just with 7 million unemployed individuals looking for work. While labor force participation among people in their prime working years has rebounded, overall participation still lags pre-pandemic levels. And, even then, participation had generally been trending lower than just a decade or two earlier.

Small businesses regularly report difficulty finding qualified applicants for available jobs, and there are concerns about shortages in key industries, such as manufacturing, especially if a mismatch between the in-demand jobs and workers with the necessary skills persists.

Thankfully, there are innovative leaders focused on student outcomes. And I am pleased that we will be able to hear from some of those leaders today about what they have found in working for students, including the perspective of private industry and community colleges.

I think many of us have heard from businesses in each of our districts about the need for skilled workers in high-demand fields, whether that be healthcare, whether it be manufacturing or construction trades. Employers have a strong pulse on the current and the future workforce needs. And we will hear today from a company about programs they have developed to educate students and develop talent.

I would also like to highlight that we will hear from a community college that is in the district that I represent, Wallace State Community College. And it serves students from a variety of backgrounds and goals. Some seek a certificate, others an associate's degree, and some others plan to transfer to 4-year institutions. Some are currently in high school, where they have a dual enrollment, while others are right out of high school. Others are older, and some are trying to change careers and have families and work responsibilities as well.

And I look forward to hearing about the continued success of this school, Wallace State Community College, and how it is focused on improving students' outcomes, including retention, completion, earnings, and employment opportunities.

Before I turn to the ranking member, Ms. DeLauro, for her remarks, I will introduce our panel of witnesses so that when we conclude you can go ahead and begin.

First, we have Mr. Preston Cooper, who is a senior fellow at the American Enterprise Institute.

Welcome. Good to have you here.

His research focuses on the return on investment of different types of higher education.

Next, we will hear from Dr. Vicki Karolewics, president of Wallace State Community College in Hanceville that I referred to earlier. I look forward to hearing from an education leader from the district I represent and about how your institution works to increase student success.

And we will also hear from Mr. Dennis Parker, a consultant in North American Regional Talent Development at Toyota, who will tell us about the successful approach Toyota has taken to develop that talent.

And last but certainly not least, we will hear from Mary Alice McCarthy, senior director of the Center on Education & Labor at New America, whose expertise includes college and career readiness, credentialing, and workforce development.

I know you all are all very busy, so I appreciate you taking time to be with us here this morning.

And, at this time, I would like to turn to the committee's ranking member for any remarks that she would like to make.

So, Ranking Member DeLauro, you have the floor.

Ms. DELAURO. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman, for holding the hearing on partnerships, collaboration between community colleges and the private sector that can best prepare today's students for tomorrow's workforce, which is a noble cause and one which we want to pay attention to.

My thanks to the witnesses—to Mr. Cooper, Dr. Karolewics, Mr. Parker. And welcome to the Labor, Health and Human Services, and Education Subcommittee.

And, Dr. McCarthy, welcome back.

It is not lost on me that we gather today on the verge of an executive order to dismantle the Department of Education.

Monday night, President Musk's so-called Department of Government Efficiency terminated \$1 billion in Education Department contracts and awards. That includes dozens of contracts awarded by the Institute of Education Sciences. That is the Department's

independent research and statistics panel that tracks school performance nationwide. So, without IES's critical work, parents, educators, policymakers are left in the dark when trying to compare student and school-wide achievement.

Mr. Musk also canceled a national study on how we can improve elementary school students' math skills, along with several grants to train and support more educators of color.

They are taking a wrecking ball to the welfare of children in school and their ability to learn. It is unconscionable, I believe immoral, and it is unlawful.

That is only where they began. Because they are coming for community colleges next.

Last week, President Trump reiterated that his top goal for his Secretary of Education, the nominee, Linda McMahon, was to—and this is a quote—“do a great job and put yourself out of a job,” end quote.

I refuse to let this hearing be a distraction from where House Republicans want to go. The Department of Education is fundamental to the American Dream, and that will be demonstrated by our hearing today.

So let's begin. Today's hearing is on a critical matter: How can we best ensure that today's secondary and post-secondary education students are studying, entering fields that best line up with the job market that they will find when they graduate? How does public education do better as a ladder of opportunity? How can it play the role that it did for our Italian, Irish, Polish, and other parents historically?

I am delighted that the subcommittee is revisiting this topic. We last held a hearing on this in 2021, where we discussed evidence-based strategies to support job seekers, including the Strengthening Community College Training Grant Program, created and funded by this subcommittee.

We created this program in my first year as chair of this subcommittee because we know that community colleges are often best positioned to support local workforce development needs. In towns, regions around the country—urban, rural, small, and large—community colleges are critical institutions for fostering an educated population, a highly skilled workforce. They have the best sense of both the needs of local industry and the unique skills and talents of local students.

In my district around New Haven, Connecticut, we have three community colleges: Gateway in New Haven, Middlesex in Middletown, Naugatuck Valley in Waterbury. I have worked extensively with all three colleges for years, seen firsthand the transformational impact these institutions have on the lives and the futures of those that they serve.

Not everyone needs a 4-year degree, but everyone does need the education necessary to find good-paying jobs that provide economic security for themselves and their families. Community colleges provide a more cost-effective option over other alternatives.

I am proud that this subcommittee has supported community colleges and workforce development in a bipartisan way in the past, but I fear that those days may be behind us. We are 4-1/2 months past the end of the fiscal year without a Labor, Health and Human

Services, Education bill that can become law, but the funding cuts in the year 2025 Labor, HHS, Education bill that has been proposed by the majority would take the wrecking ball to programs that help align post-secondary education with workforce needs.

There is a proposal of a cut of \$1.7 billion from the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity State Grants—slash investments for youth job training, adult job training programs that prepare our lower-income neighbors for the workforce. Without these programs aligning students and adults with available job opportunities, we will have a less-skilled workforce, higher unemployment, greater strain on the safety net programs.

Also, the majority has proposed to cut student financial aid by over a billion dollars, eliminate the Supplemental Education Opportunity Grants for 833,000 students, get rid of the 330,000 youngsters who do Federal work-study positions that help to finance their post-secondary education.

Finally, the total elimination of a program that helps student-parents afford childcare while they attend community colleges classes. That puts education further out of the reach for families that need it the most for their own economic security.

I am disheartened, to say the least, to see my colleagues across the aisle take aim at the programs that help their own constituents advance their education, programs that grow local economies, improve the livelihoods of families.

And when we sit down to negotiate a full-year funding bill that can reach 218 votes—which the House Republicans' proposal cannot—I look forward to maintaining this funding that allows working people to climb up the ladder.

This committee, this Congress, should be focused on finishing the full-year appropriations bills. We now stand less than 5 weeks away from the March 14th deadline without so much as a top-line agreement.

I think the American people are demanding help with the cost of living—the single biggest issue that faces them today. And we can do that here. This committee has the incredible power to change lives and help the middle class. We can help make education affordable, make it easier to succeed in the workforce, through our funding bills.

Unfortunately, the pressing need to finish these full-year bills is not even the most urgent challenge to our Federal education priorities. The Trump administration and maybe the Musk administration and his DOGE underlings—it is unclear to me who is calling the shots in the White House—are squaring their sights on the Department of Education.

The Department of Education, created by an act of Congress, funded by appropriations bills passed by Congress, signed into law, ensures that no matter the wealth of their family, that does not have—what they have in terms of their economic wealth, or whether they have a disability or other disadvantage, every single child in this country has the opportunity to obtain an education and dream for a better life for their kids. It is the embodiment of what Horace Mann called, and I quote, “the great equalizer.”

Education has been and will always be locally driven in this country. Curriculum and other policies are best left to the States

and to local leaders. No one disputes that. But the role of the Department of Education is crucial in securing the opportunities and the rights of every student in America.

Instead of shoring up our investments in American students, President Trump plans to follow the “Project 2025” playbook and turn public education over to the highest bidders and to the wealthiest families.

Families in communities across the country are reeling from multiple crises in classrooms; skyrocketing costs for childcare, pre-K, post-secondary education; learning loss; achievement gaps; educator shortages; and epidemics of loneliness and school violence, and they are looking to their elected leaders for solutions.

The American people need smaller class sizes, lower costs, but the President’s proposed executive order will bring the exact opposite. This executive order is about creating a country where education is not a public good for the benefit of all of society but a wholly profit-driven enterprise. This is about making sure the quality of education is no longer accessible to middle-class families but only to the privileged and for the descendants of the wealthy.

Before the election, Donald Trump said he planned to cut investments in our children’s education—and I quote, “cut in half and get much better education in some of the States,” end quote. No word on the fate of the children and the families in any of the other States.

And to the chairman, who I have great, great respect for—we have worked together in the past. You know, I don’t know if Alabama is counted in, quote, “some of the States.” I am sure you do know this, through the Department of Education. Because Alabama annually receives \$239 million for the needs of 100,000 students with disabilities; \$303 million to ensure there is a teacher in the classroom for 452,000 low-income students, or 63 percent of Alabama’s students; \$36 million for career and technical education, workforce development; \$50 million to help make college more accessible for low-income and first-generation students and for students with disabilities. This is in addition to the hundreds of millions of dollars that go to Alabama students for Pell grants and other education programs.

I don’t know the details of the Alabama State education funding, but I doubt if Alabama or Connecticut or any other State is ready to absorb the costs that are covered by the Department of Education.

Rather, the elimination of any of these programs will inevitably lead to more students being taught by fewer teachers, fewer opportunities for disadvantaged students, lower achievement, lower economic mobility, lower prosperity for the majority of Americans who are not already well-off and well-connected.

Less than 2 weeks ago, I visited a Title I school in Woodbridge, Connecticut, Amity Regional High School. The students were in the middle of showing me their projects when President Trump illegally froze Federal funding for their technology and for teachers’ pay. Thankfully, thanks to Democrats’ forceful objections, multiple interventions from the Federal courts, that freeze was temporarily lifted. But this was just the beginning of a full-scale assault on public education.

Meanwhile, Elon Musk, in his illegal campaign to take over Federal agencies created by Congress, has already infiltrated the Department of Education, where he has reportedly accessed personal and sensitive financial information, including for grantees.

So, while we must continue to work towards full-year appropriations bills that could pass the Congress, we cannot allow this invasion and destruction of our government by heavily conflicted billionaires to continue. Government of the people, by the people, for the people cannot be replaced by government of billionaires, by billionaires, and for billionaires. The world cannot afford the American experiment in self-government and our separation of powers across three branches of government to fail.

I implore my colleagues to fight to retain Congress's authority over spending—the appropriations authority over spending—and over the existence of departments and agencies that we created. If it is the will of the people to shrink or eliminate a governmental organization—and that will might be there—then it is the prerogative that Congress, and only the Congress, to act on it.

Education in this country is in crisis. The Department of Education stands ready to assist State and local education agencies recover from learning loss, achievement gaps, educator shortages, to help struggling families afford childcare, pre-K, and post-secondary education.

As we will discuss today, community colleges are an irreplaceable source of economic mobility in this country, so we must learn how to best align these institutions with local workforce needs.

We must implement and stand up for the programs that serve this need wherever this is a Federal role to be engaged. What we cannot do, and what we will not do, is to retreat from our children's education altogether.

Thank you, and I yield back.

Mr. ADERHOLT. Thank you, Ms. DeLauro.

And now I would like to turn to our witnesses.

You will each have 5 minutes to deliver your opening remarks. I know you have submitted written testimony that might be a little bit over 5 minutes, so it will be included. So we will include that in the record in full.

So, Mr. Cooper, we will begin with you. So I look forward to hearing your testimony, and you have the floor.

Mr. COOPER. Thank you.

Good morning, Chairman Aderholt, Ranking Member DeLauro, and distinguished members of the subcommittee. Thank you for the opportunity to testify today on the Federal role in post-secondary education and the value of different educational pathways beyond the 4-year college degree.

My name is Preston Cooper, and I am a senior fellow focusing on the economics of higher education at the American Enterprise Institute, a nonprofit, nonpartisan public policy research organization based here in Washington, D.C.

For decades, students and policymakers alike have viewed the 4-year college degree as a golden ticket to the middle class. But in recent years, that consensus that higher education is a sure-fire investment has fallen apart. Among other factors, high rates of student loan nonpayment and default have driven a collapse in public

confidence in the value of college. As a result, college enrollment has fallen 12 percent since its peak in 2010.

To be sure, a 4-year college degree is still a great investment, on average. But an average is just that. A large minority of students who pursue 4-year degrees wind up no better off financially than if they had not attended college in the first place.

Moreover, a 4-year degree is not the only viable pathway to a comfortable, middle-class life. Other promising options exist within the post-secondary education ecosystem but do not always receive the recognition they are due.

The payoff of a 4-year college degree varies widely by field of study. Different college majors unlock different sorts of job opportunities, and some skill sets are more in demand than others. Majors such as engineering, computer science, nursing, and economics tend to deliver very large financial benefits, but that isn't always the case for other majors, such as fine arts and English literature.

But a student's college major is not the only factor that matters; tuition prices can make a difference. When college is more expensive, it is less likely that your degree will pay off, all else being equal. A degree which pays off when tuition is \$5,000 a year may not be a good bet at \$20,000 a year.

Graduation rates can also make or break the financial value of college. Most of the economic value of a degree is contingent on actually finishing the degree. Students must graduate to reap most of the benefits. But, nationwide, only 62 percent of students who start college complete a degree within 6 years, and 124 federally funded institutions have a completion rate below 10 percent.

The uneven value of 4-year college degrees has led many prospective students to consider community college or vocational school as alternatives. Many certificates in the technical trades have higher expected payoffs than the median bachelor's degree.

Moreover, promising options exist outside the Federal Student Aid system entirely. For instance, Virginia's FastForward initiative offers short-term training for industry-recognized credentials in high-demand occupations. America's small but growing apprenticeship system also offers excellent opportunities for on-the-job learning, with numerous studies showing high starting salaries and sustained earnings growth for apprentices.

Unfortunately, Federal Government subsidies create a tilted playing field between traditional higher education programs and other pathways. While students can use Pell grants and student loans for traditional 4-year degree programs and many sub-baccalaureate credentials, statutory restrictions mean other types of programs are ineligible for funding.

For instance, minimum clock-hour requirements mean that short-term workforce education programs, such as Virginia FastForward, largely cannot qualify for Pell grant funding. A requirement that funds only be used for courses that are part of a degree or certificate program means that some individuals completing apprenticeships or other on-the-job training cannot use their aid to pay for complementary classroom instructions.

Finally, new and potentially innovative providers of higher education often cannot get access to Federal funding streams thanks

to accreditation requirements designed to benefit incumbent institutions.

The Federal Government should not put its thumb on the scales in favor of the traditional 4-year college degree or any other educational model. However, policymakers should also strive to ensure that all federally funded programs, traditional or nontraditional, maintain high standards with respect to student outcomes. No single post-secondary pathway will be the right answer for every student. Policymakers should therefore aim to elevate high-quality pathways across the board.

Thank you for your attention, and I look forward to your questions.

[The information follows:]



Statement before the House Committee on Appropriations
Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human Services, Education, and Related
Agencies
On Career-Ready Students: Innovations from Community Colleges and Private
Industry

Promising Pathways

Expanding High-Value Postsecondary Education Options

Preston Cooper

Senior Fellow, American Enterprise Institute

February 12, 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 Aderholt, Ranking Member DeLauro, and distinguished members of the Subcommittee. Thank you for the opportunity to testify today on the federal role in postsecondary education, and the value of different educational pathways beyond the four-year college degree.

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.

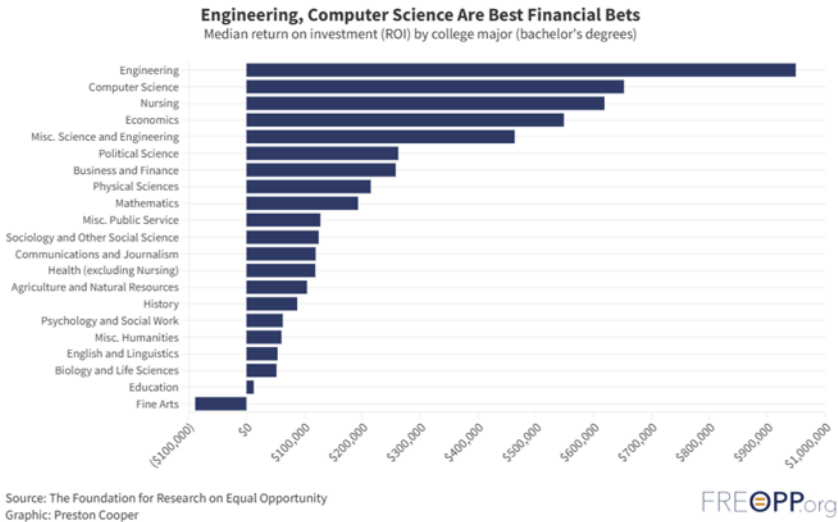
What is the value of a college degree?

For decades, students and policymakers alike have viewed the four-year college degree as a “golden ticket” to the middle class. But in recent years, the consensus that higher education is a surefire investment has fallen apart. Among other factors, high rates of student loan nonpayment (prior to the pandemic, 11 million borrowers were behind on their federal loans)¹ have driven a collapse in public confidence in the value of college.² As a result, college enrollment has fallen 12 percent since its peak in 2010.³

Is college worth it or not? The truth is somewhere in between. A four-year college degree is still a good investment on average. However, an average is just that; a large minority of students who pursue four-year degrees wind up no better off financially than if they had not attended college in the first place. Moreover, a four-year degree is not the only viable pathway to a comfortable middle-class life. Other promising options exist within the postsecondary education ecosystem, but do not always receive the recognition they are due.

When college pays off—and when it doesn't

My research focuses on the return on investment (ROI) of different postsecondary options. ROI is a measure of the expected financial value of a particular pathway: the lifetime increase in earnings that a student can expect from higher education, accounting for the price of tuition, the opportunity cost of pursuing the credential, and the risk that the student will not complete their program. Programs with positive ROI tend to leave most students better off, financially.⁴ Four-year college degrees mostly provide positive ROI, but there is considerable variation. Around a fifth of bachelor's degree programs have ROI of \$500,000 or more, but a roughly equivalent number have negative ROI—meaning they leave most students worse off.



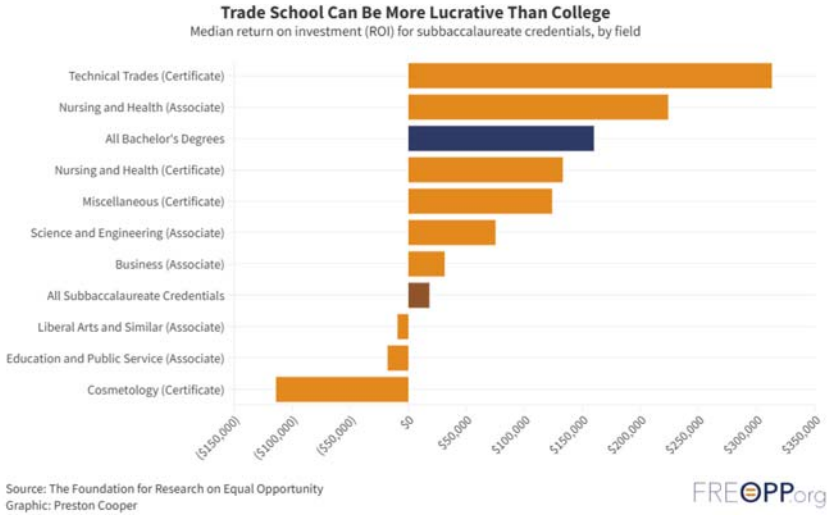
Field of study is perhaps the most important factor determining whether a college degree will pay off. Different college majors unlock different sorts of job opportunities, and

some skill sets are more in demand than others. Majors such as engineering, computer science, nursing, and economics tend to deliver very large financial benefits, even after accounting for the costs and risks of college. That isn't always the case for majors such as fine arts, education, and English literature.

But a student's college major is not the only factor that matters. Tuition prices can make a difference; when college is more expensive, it's less likely that your degree will pay off, all else being equal. A degree which pays off when tuition is \$5,000 per year may not be a good bet at \$20,000 per year.⁵ While average tuition has fallen in recent years, it remains well above historical levels.⁶

Graduation rates can also make or break the financial value of college. Most of the economic value of a degree is contingent on finishing the degree: students must graduate to reap the benefits.⁷ But nationwide, only 62 percent of students who start college complete a degree within six years.⁸ And many colleges do far worse: 124 institutions have a completion rate below 10 percent.⁹

The uneven value of four-year college degrees has led many prospective students to consider community college or vocational school as alternatives.¹⁰ There are many promising pathways in this area: certificates in the technical trades (including vehicle maintenance and repair, precision metal working, HVAC technology, and electrical and power transmission installation) have higher expected payoffs than most bachelor's degrees. But as with four-year degrees, field of study matters at the subbaccalaureate level too. Less-than-four-year credentials in fields like cosmetology or liberal arts have very low, and sometimes nonexistent, ROI.



This analysis doesn't even cover programs that operate outside the federal student aid system. But there are promising options there as well. For instance, Virginia's FastForward initiative offers short-term training for industry-recognized credentials in high-demand occupations; an early analysis shows completers enjoyed a significant boost in wages.¹¹ America's small but growing apprenticeship system also offers excellent opportunities for on-the-job learning. An analysis of Kentucky's Federation for Advanced Manufacturing Education (FAME) apprenticeship showed high starting salaries and sustained earnings growth for participants.¹²

How federal student loans subsidize low-quality higher education

In the most recent academic year, the federal government disbursed \$83 billion in student loans to over 5,300 institutions of higher education.¹³ However, the federal

government does little underwriting and imposes few quality controls to ensure that institutions deliver the ROI that students and taxpayers ought to expect from postsecondary education. This enables the continued existence of low- or negative-ROI programs.

Numerous studies have linked federal student loan availability to increases in tuition. This allows the costs of higher education to become out of line with the benefits.¹⁴ It also results in the extension of loans to students who are unlikely to pay them back. Prior to the March 2020 pause on student loan payments, 11 million borrowers were in default or more than 30 days delinquent on their loans.¹⁵ The consequences of nonpayment include a lower credit rating, involuntary collections such as wage garnishment, and substantial accumulation of interest and penalties.¹⁶ Much of the burden passes to taxpayers: the Congressional Budget Office expects that the federal government will lose \$223 billion on student loans originated between 2025 and 2034.¹⁷

The federal government’s subsidies also create a tilted playing field between “traditional” higher education programs and other pathways. While students can use Pell Grants and student loans for traditional four-year degree programs and many subbaccalaureate credentials, statutory restrictions mean other types of programs are ineligible for funding. For instance, minimum clock-hour requirements mean short-term workforce education programs such as Virginia FastForward largely cannot qualify for Pell Grant funding. A requirement that funds only be used for courses that are part of a degree or certificate program means that some individuals completing apprenticeships or other on-the-job training cannot use their aid to pay for complementary classroom instruction. Finally, new and potentially innovative providers of higher education often cannot get

access to federal funding streams thanks to costly and burdensome accreditation requirements.

Looking ahead

All forms of high-quality postsecondary education should operate on a level playing field with respect to federal funding; the federal government should not put its thumb on the scales in favor of the traditional four-year college degree or any other educational model. However, policymakers should also ensure that all federally-funded programs—traditional or nontraditional—maintain high standards with respect to student outcomes. No single postsecondary pathway will be the right answer for every student. Policymakers should therefore aim to elevate high-quality pathways across the board.

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Mr. ADERHOLT. Thank you.

Dr. Karolewics.

Ms. KAROLEWICS. Good morning, Chairman Aderholt, Ranking Member DeLauro, and distinguished members of the subcommittee. As you know, I am Dr. Vicki Karolewics, and I have had the privilege of serving as president of Wallace State Community College for the last 21 years.

Thank you for inviting me to appear before you today to speak on the topic of career preparation and to represent Wallace State Community College.

We are a nationally recognized community college serving more than 8,000 students each semester. Located in the heart of north Alabama, more than half of the State's population resides within a 60-mile radius of our campus. Yet we are a uniquely rural-serving institution. Our region is a mix of manufacturing and agriculture, including automakers like Mercedes and Honda and Hyundai and Mazda Toyota. At the same time, the college's home county is top in the State for poultry and cattle production and second for overall agricultural production.

My remarks today are intended to answer the questions of: How does Wallace State help students to maximize their earnings and employment potential to maximize their return on investment? And how have we maximized student outcomes?

Simply stated, we focus on powerful partnerships and purposeful pathways, pathways to good jobs—good jobs—that pay a living wage.

Many of our students are nontraditional. They are single mothers, working parents, older adults, displaced workers, first-generation, and low-income. They need good jobs, jobs that pay the minimum earnings required for economic self-sufficiency, jobs that result in social and economic mobility.

Those jobs don't always require a bachelor's degree, but they do require some post-secondary education beyond the high school diploma. And they are often middle-skills jobs. Middle-skills workers are vital to the American economy and to their local communities.

Our pathways work was advanced through the design and implementation of guided pathways, which included curricular alignment designed to accelerate students to completion of credentials having workforce value in the middle-skills jobs as well as toward university transfer.

The curricular alignment is closely tied to labor market outcomes and to our partners in industry and education. An important strategy has been the creation of stacked credentials. Because so many community college students do "stop out" before earning a college degree, latticed credentials enable those students to leave the college with marketable credentials at multiple points in their progress.

An example of this practice is a student earning a practical nursing credential on the pathway to the associate degree for registered nursing. Should that student be forced to stop out due to life circumstances, he or she could still work as an LPN and make a living wage.

Wallace State is very intentional about career preparedness along the lifelong continuum from cradle to grave. Essential to our

success are the partnerships that we cultivate with business and industry, K-12, universities, healthcare, nonprofits, and government.

One of the most valuable strategies the college has employed to enable students to maximize their employment and earnings potential is work-based learning. Earn-and-learn opportunities, such as apprenticeships and internships, connect students to high-value, middle-skills jobs along the pathway to completion, maximizing their earnings potential at graduation through higher starting salaries.

One of the college's high-impact practices is our NCAL FAME program. Wallace State partnered with industry leaders to develop the North Central Alabama Federation for Advanced Manufacturing Education and to create a curriculum that is aligned to employers' requirements, adopting the advanced manufacturing technician, or AMT, model that was developed by Toyota in an earn-and-learn format.

And just as an aside, there was a competition in Montgomery yesterday, the Alabama FAME Summit, and our student won the gold. So we are proud of that.

Because of our intentionality and focus on creating purposeful pathways and powerful partnerships, our student success rate is more than 80 percent.

This is just a brief snapshot of Wallace State's multilayered approach to preparing our students for careers with living wages. Again, I am very honored to be here with you today.

My team and I will be back in Washington, by the way, in April to find out if we have won the \$1 million Aspen Prize awarded to the best community college in the Nation. We are currently a top 10 finalist.

Thank you again, Mr. Chairman, for this opportunity, and I look forward to this discussion.

[The information follows:]

Written Testimony of Dr. Vicki P. Karolewics, President,
Wallace State Community College – Hanceville
Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human Services, Education

Good morning Chairman Aderholt, Ranking Member DeLauro, and distinguished members of the subcommittee. Thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today to speak on the topic of Career Preparation. As a career educator, I have devoted the last 38 years of my life to serving community college students and employers in the great state of Alabama, so today I speak to you with the voice of a community college. Wallace State Community College is uniquely positioned in the heart of north Alabama, where more than half of the state's 5.2 million citizens reside within a 60-mile radius of our main campus. Wallace State is a rural college, located in Hanceville, Alabama, whose population is 3,300. Yet, Wallace State enjoys a large enrollment of 6,400 degree-seeking credit students and more than 2,000 workforce or non-credit students last fall semester. Our traditional student body is largely non-traditional - single mothers, working parents, older adults, dislocated workers, first generation students, 68% are female, 60% attend part-time, and 30% are over the age of 25. Our mission is to provide education that transforms lives and communities, and everything we do is focused on assuring Alabama has a talent pipeline for the workforce of tomorrow.

This is an era of change for our great nation's community colleges, whose historical mission prioritized access, assuring that all people had financial access to affordable postsecondary education. Over the last decade, we have increasingly prioritized completion, and the student success agenda led to significant reforms. Today, however, we are laser focused on creating economic and social mobility for our students to assure they earn credentials that are aligned to workforce demands, stackable credentials that have workforce value, and we assess the extent to which our graduates attain post-completion success upon entering the workforce and earn a family sustaining wage. Our workforce programs are primarily concentrated in the Middle Skills Jobs space, and as Anthony Carnavale of the Georgetown University Center on Education and the Workforce said, "These middle skills workers are vital to the American economy and to their local communities. They include air traffic controllers, dental hygienists, radiation therapists, and veterinary technicians. They provide emergency and nonemergency medical services, keep our heating and air conditioning running and maintain our telecommunications infrastructure. Without them, the economy and society as we know it would struggle to function."¹

Moreover, "Early-career middle skills workers in these jobs not only outearn most young workers with a bachelor's degree but also experience considerable earnings growth over time, with median annual earnings that rise to \$80,000 by mid-career (ages 36-49)."²

How does Wallace State help students maximize their earnings and employment potential? Their return on investment (ROI)? How have we maximized student outcomes? Wallace State has been recognized four times as an Aspen Institute top 150 community colleges in America because of the progress we have made in our student success reforms and in the improvement in student retention and completion. Today, Wallace State Community College is an Aspen finalist, one of only ten community colleges in the nation to be recognized by the Aspen Institute for the quality of our student outcomes. Our overarching strategic goal for student success reforms was *Readiness*³, which meant to assure that our students are *Ready for College*, *Ready for Work*, and *Ready for Life* by promoting strategies to help them *Start Early*, *Start Right*, *Finish*, and *Succeed*. Simply stated, we utilized *Pathways* and *Partnerships* to accomplish our *Readiness*³ reform agenda.

Pathways. Wallace State's completion agenda began more than a decade ago, when the college's graduation rate was 20%. The college prioritized reducing the numbers of students who began their college journey in developmental/remedial education and accelerating students to completion. At Wallace State, the percentage of developmental students passing the gateway mathematics and English courses has increased from 68% in 2014-15 to 84% in 2022-23. In 2017-18, there were 1,061 unduplicated enrollments in developmental courses with a success rate of 75%. In the most recent year, the unduplicated enrollments dropped to 630 with almost the same success rate, 72%. This marks a 41% decrease in the number of developmental/remedial enrollments, saving students and their families time and thousands of dollars, and accelerating them to completion. Wallace State subsequently led a redesign of the curriculum statewide, collapsing all developmental courses into one developmental course for mathematics and one for composition, adding an aggressive three-tiered co-requisite placement model to ensure that the default pathway became gateway courses, resulting in a 71% decrease in developmental credit hours over time.

Our Pathways work was advanced through the design and implementation of Guided Pathways as an organizational model, which included curricular alignment designed to accelerate students to completion of credentials having workforce value in middle skills jobs and to university transfer for a

similarly valuable bachelor's degree. The curricular alignment is closely tied to labor market data and to our partners in industry and education – both K-12 and university. An important strategy has been the creation of stacked credentials, particularly in Applied Technologies (CTE). Because so many community college students stop out before earning a two-year degree, latticed credentials enable students to leave with marketable credentials at multiple points in their progress. In Mechatronics, Welding, Machine Tool, and Engineering alone, students can earn more than 38 short- and long-term certificates. Since 2015 the college has added more than 200 stacked certificates and other industry recognized credentials, such as NC3 certifications. This redesign greatly increased graduation rates among Applied Technologies students, from 31% in 2013-14 to 59% in 2022-23, an overall 90% increase. Because most graduates remain in the service area of the college, this progression contributes greatly to increasing per capita income.

Partnerships. Essential to our success are the partnerships we cultivate with business and industry, K-12, universities, healthcare, non-profits, and government. One of the most valuable strategies the college has employed to enable students to maximize their employment and earnings potential is work-based learning. Earn and learn opportunities, such as apprenticeships and internships, connect students to high value middle skill jobs along the pathway to completion, maximizing their earnings potential at graduation through higher starting salaries. One of the college's high impact programs is our NCAL FAME program. Wallace State partnered with industry leaders to develop the North Central Alabama Federation for Advanced Manufacturing Education and to create a curriculum that is aligned with employers' requirements, adopting the Advanced Manufacturing Technician (AMT) model that was developed by Toyota in an earn and learn format. AMTs attend classes two days a week and work at least 24 hours a week for a local, sponsoring employer, earning a competitive wage. In some cases, sponsoring employers also provide additional financial support, so that AMTs can graduate debt free. NCAL FAME partners with 25 employers, including AgCo, Alabama Cardington, Yutaka Technologies, Royal Technologies, American Cast Iron Pipe Corporation, C&A Automation, Dynetics, EZB SysTec, GE Appliances, Mazda-Toyota, YKTA, Royal Technologies, Orchid Orthopedic Solutions, RWC, HomTex, HFI, Jack Daniel Cooperidge, KAMTEK and Cerrowire. A key feature of the program is that industry earn and learn partners not only mentor and train students, but also employ students post-completion at a higher wage. To date, 88% of the students received full-time job offers at a higher starting wage in mid-

level positions. Starting above entry-level maximizes their education and skills, and leads to significantly more financial growth.

Another partnership and integrated pathway that have yielded significant return on investment for graduates is the concurrent ADN/BSN degree - Joint Enrollment – with the University of Alabama at Birmingham (UAB) School of Nursing and Athens State University. As a rural serving community college, Wallace State's partnerships and healthcare pathways not only substantially increases graduates' earning capacity with the bachelor's degree, but also increase the available nursing workforce to rural Alabama. Additionally, Wallace State also developed the first nursing apprenticeship in partnership with UAB Hospital, which has now expanded to twenty healthcare facilities.

A Workforce Opportunities for Rural Communities Grant was a catalyst for developing a one-of-a-kind Diesel by Distance program, providing flexible learning options for students geographically distant and pursuing careers in diesel technology. The program serves dual enrollment students, incumbent workers who are geographically immobile, and the emerging workforce. Diesel by Distance seamlessly integrates online and virtual reality classes with hands-on training through scheduled just-in-time, in-person skill validation sessions during evenings and weekends. One of the most significant aspects of this earn and learn program model is its dedication to recruiting and retaining women, persons of color, and adult learners, and its reliance on employer partnerships. It is noteworthy that the very first enrollee was a female, single mother from south Alabama, and her employer sponsor was Altec. She attended tuition free and is now employed at a higher wage than had she not had the earn and learn experience.

Perkins funding and a Tech Prep Demonstration Project Grant were used to develop a longstanding Early College program – Fast Track. The Fast Track program partners with our 36 service area high schools to enable high school juniors and seniors to *Start Early* – they are enrolled full-time on Wallace State's campus, completing their junior and senior year of high school and their high school diploma through dual enrollment pathways to the associate degree. The program has graduated and transferred almost 1,000 high school students since its inception, with a completion rate higher than our native population. These students maximize their employment and earnings potential by entering the workforce two years earlier than their high school peers.

Finally, workforce programs offering rapid training at low or no-cost are critical to maximizing the employment and earnings potential, especially for persons experiencing recovery, a disability, or housing

insecurities. The Alabama Community College System developed a unique rapid short-term training solution that is funded by the Alabama Legislature and offered at no cost to Alabama residents. The training consists of an on-line, virtual theory portion accompanied by short-term hands-on training in careers such as Heavy Equipment Operator, Fiber Optics Technician, Medication Assistant, and Nursing Support Technician. This workforce credit pathway recently enrolled a class of five men in a CDL driver training program who were residents of the Royal Pines Recovery Program, completing the program in just a few weeks at no cost to them. At the conclusion all five men were offered Truck Driver jobs by R. E. Garrison, jobs that pay far more than a living wage in our area. Additionally, in partnership with the Alabama Department of Rehabilitation Services, Wallace State developed a program specifically designed to offer CDL training for persons confined to wheelchairs, and have trained five persons with disabilities to date, most were Veterans, and all are employed. A living wage in the region Wallace State serves is \$40,000 annually, and labor market data reveal median annual earnings for tractor-trailer truck drivers was \$49,348, and those jobs are listed among the top 5 of the 20 largest occupations in our service area.

In conclusion, oftentimes the greatest challenge and barrier to maximizing student outcomes is Wallace State's finite capacity to build programs and services to offer more Pathways and build more Partnerships that are lifechanging for many of the students we serve. The programs funded by Labor, Health and Human Services, and Education are exponentially influential in enabling community colleges in general and Wallace State in particular to not only complete a degree or credential, but most importantly to earn a living wage, and a family sustaining wage that leads to intergenerational change through social and economic mobility. Thank you for the honor of presenting testimony to this Subcommittee.

¹Carnavale, Anthony; *Small Towns, Big Opportunities*, 2024

²Strohl, Jeff; *The Great Misalignment*, 2024

³Wyner, Josh; *Community College 3.0: What's Next for the Student Success Agenda?*

Mr. ADERHOLT. Thank you.

Okay. Dr. McCarthy, we will go to you next.

Ms. MCCARTHY. Good morning, Chairman Aderholt, Ranking Member DeLauro, and esteemed members of the committee. It is an honor to be with you this morning. Thank you for this opportunity.

I lead the Center on Education & Labor at New America. We are committed to expanding access to the middle class and family-sustaining careers. We have a large body of work on community colleges, apprenticeships, youth pathways, and career technical education.

And this topic is very dear to my heart. I have been working to build more pathways to the middle class for well over a decade, first as a member of the career service at the U.S. Department of Labor and then at the Department of Education and now at New America.

Over that time, I have learned three big lessons on the opportunities and challenges to expanding access to the middle class.

The first is that the desire to expand access to good jobs and family-sustaining careers and to strengthen our middle class is broadly shared. The understanding that community colleges and high-quality career and technical education will be essential for making that happen is also widely understood and shared.

It is one of the best things about working in this space: You can pretty much go anywhere—red States, blue States, big cities, small towns—and you will find that most people want to see more opportunities for young people that aren't just traditional college.

In fact, I imagine the majority of everyone's constituents in this room would like to see more pathways into the middle class. In this time of such intense polarization, it is a comfort to know that there are important things that we still agree on.

The second lesson is that, in all my time working in this space, I have never heard anyone complain that our community colleges are just getting too much money. I have never visited a college that had a surplus of resources or that could provide all of the support services that they know their students need.

I have certainly heard complaints about community colleges, in particular about their completion rates being too low, but these have just as often come from college leaders themselves, eager to find ways to improve those outcomes and curious about the latest research.

And the third lesson is that when community colleges do have additional funding, whether it is targeted grants like the Strengthening Community College Training Grant Program or the HEERF funds during the pandemic, they put them to good use.

Colleges use these resources to develop programs in new and emerging sectors and fields like artificial intelligence or electric vehicles. They build new industry partnerships and work-based learning opportunities, create and staff the advising and career services that their students need, and build high-quality data systems that help them understand who their students are and how they are doing every step of the way.

So, as we enter the budgeting season, I am finding myself more than a bit bewildered and alarmed by the attacks on education taking place right now.

First is the decision to halt educational research supported through the Institute for Educational Sciences, IES. In my written testimony, I provide examples of evidence-based practices for helping students complete high-quality career preparation programs at community colleges. We know these strategies are successful because they have been extensively studied, subject to rigorous research and evaluation, much of it funded through IES. These studies have been a critical source of learning for education leaders for decades. It is essential that this research continue.

Second is the insistence that we cut education spending. In my written testimony, I note that current funding for career and technical education is less than what it was in 2001, and I call for a substantial increase to investments in community colleges, including tripling the investment in the Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education Program to \$4 billion a year.

Even at this level, we would still be far behind what other advanced economies invest in their vocational education systems and well within our means. Most importantly, it is critical to meeting the desire of the majority of Americans for building more pathways to the middle class that do not pass through traditional higher education, which, again, I believe all of your constituents share.

Instead of increasing funding for something that most Americans support, we are hearing that we cannot afford to invest more in CTE and community colleges or in Head Start or job training or WIOA or Pell grants because we need to extend tax cuts to billionaires—literally putting the financial demands of billionaires and multimillionaires over young people who need quality career education, over middle-class families that need affordable pathways to good jobs.

Third are the reckless threats to dismantle the Department of Education, an extreme position that is well outside mainstream public opinion. I am not a constitutional lawyer, so I won't get into the legality of these actions, which seem highly questionable, but I can say with confidence that dismantling the Department of Education and relocating its various programs to other agencies will not be good for students.

In the case of CTE—career and technical education—and community colleges, the tremendous improvements in both over the last two decades have come primarily through strengthening their connections to our K–12 and higher education systems, making it easier for students to move from high school to community college to higher education or directly into a career without losing credit and without losing momentum.

Moving the Office of Career, Technical, and Adult Education out of the Department of Education would be a step backward. It would be a step toward the time when vocational education was disconnected from other systems and a dead-end for many students.

As a last request, I implore Congress to exercise its responsibilities under Article I of the Constitution and rein in these destruc-

tive and, frankly, anti-American attacks on the middle class by the executive branch since January 20th.

Thank you for the opportunity to be with you today and for your kind consideration of these recommendations.

[The information follows:]



Building More On-Ramps to the Middle Class and Beyond:
Best Practices in Community College Career Education

Testimony of Dr. Mary Alice McCarthy
Senior Director, New America, Center on Education & Labor

Before the House Appropriations Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human Services,
Education, and Related Agencies

February 12, 2025

Thank you to Chairman Aderholt, Ranking Member DeLauro and members of the Committee for the honor of speaking with you today on this important topic of community colleges, innovations in career education, and pathways into the middle class.

My name is Mary Alice McCarthy and I direct the Center on Education and Labor at New America. The Center is dedicated to strengthening pathways into the middle class that do not pass through traditional higher education. In a time of rising income inequality, it is imperative that we find ways to shore up economic opportunities for all Americans, most especially for the more than sixty percent who do not have a bachelor's degree. Community colleges are and will continue to be central to those efforts. Thank you for the opportunity to share some ideas with you on how we can both leverage and better resource our community college system to build a thriving middle class.

The Community's College

Our country's national network of over 1,000 community and technical colleges serve more than 12 million students each year, over 40 percent of all undergraduates. They operate in small towns and large cities across the country, providing local residents a wide range of affordable postsecondary educational offerings while also supporting the economic and workforce development needs of their communities.

Community colleges are the most diverse institutions of higher education, mirroring the growing diversity of the communities they serve.¹ They serve the largest share of first-generation college-goers² as well as a large share (47 percent) of low-income students.³ Millions of students begin their journey to a bachelor's degree at their local community college and millions more complete occupationally-focused certificate and associate degree programs that allow them to start their career without having to earn a bachelor's.

Despite their critical role in providing an affordable and widely accessible entry point into postsecondary education, community colleges remain significantly underfunded relative to their higher education peers and relative to their critical and comprehensive mission.⁴ In particular, the career and technical education programs that are so essential to providing pathways into the middle class that do not require a four-year degree, are

¹ For detailed information on community college demographics, see Community College FAQ's from the Community College Research Center at Columbia University: <https://ccrc.tc.columbia.edu/community-college-faqs.html>

² See Lumina Foundation brief: "First Generation College Students": <https://www.luminafoundation.org/topics/todays-students/first-generation-students/#:~:text=First%2Dgeneration%20students%20are%20likelier,options%20for%20first%2Dgen%20students>.

³ See "Race and Ethnicity in Higher Education": <https://www.equityinhighered.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/11/Low-Income-Students-Brief-final.pdf>

⁴ See "Public Funding for Community Colleges", Community College Research Center, Columbia University: <https://ccrc.tc.columbia.edu/publications/public-funding-community-colleges.html>

extremely under-resourced. These programs are often more expensive to operate (due to requirements like labs, equipment, and staffing) than traditional academic programs and require more external partnerships to reach their full potential, which, in turn, require resources to build and sustain.⁵

Building More Pathways to the Middle Class

The growing gap in the economic well-being of people with and without a bachelor's degree is harming our nation's democracy, economy, and communities. The best way to close that gap is to build more pathways into the middle class. High quality career and technical education (CTE) programs at community colleges that are responsive to local economic needs should be at the center of those efforts.

The widening income gap between bachelor's degree holders and others, while real, can create the impression that the only path to economic security is through four-year college. Indeed, an unintended consequence of the "college for all" push of the last several decades has been an under-appreciation of other routes to economic security and too little emphasis on strengthening and expanding them. But the fact is that there are still many good jobs that do not require a bachelor's degree, and community colleges play a critical role in providing access to them.

Recent work by the Federal Reserve Banks of Atlanta and Cleveland can help community colleges align their CTE programs with good jobs.⁶ Using a variety of public and

⁵ See "It All Adds Up: Why and How to Measure the Cost of Career & Technical Education from IES: <https://ies.ed.gov/blogs/research/post/it-all-adds-up-why-and-how-to-measure-the-cost-of-career-and-technical-education#:~:text=Due%20to%20additional%2C%20non%2Dstandard,resources%20needed%20in%20regular%20classrooms.>

⁶ See the Opportunities Occupations Monitor : <https://www.atlantafed.org/cweo/data-tools/opportunity-occupations-monitor>

private data sources, the Banks have identified a class of “opportunity occupations” which they define as jobs that pay above the average median wage but do not require a bachelor’s degree.⁷ Their “opportunity occupations monitor” measures the share of opportunity occupations in a given metropolitan area. For example, in St. Louis, Missouri, 32 percent of local jobs are opportunity occupations; in northern Alabama it is 28 percent; in Hartford, CT, 33 percent. In short, every community has a healthy share of occupations that pay at or above the local median wage and do not require a bachelor’s degree. Community colleges can prepare students for those occupations - and we need to invest in them to do just that.

But we also need to expand the share of jobs that are opportunity occupations well beyond the 25-35 percent range that exist now - and a number of innovative community colleges are leading the way. Some are working with local employers to adopt skills-based hiring strategies which expand the pool of potential candidates for a job by replacing degree requirements for an open position with clear descriptions of the skills and competencies necessary to do that job.⁸ Too many jobs today are walled off behind bachelor degree requirements that keep out candidates who may well have the necessary skills and experience.⁹

Even more promising for expanding the range of opportunities for community college students are recent investments in science and technology development that are integrating community colleges into regional innovation economies. The National Science Foundation’s “Regional Innovation Engines” investments aim to accelerate the

⁷ See here for data sources for the opportunity occupation explorer:

<https://www.philadelphiafed.org/surveys-and-data/community-development-data/occupational-mobility-explorer#about-the-data>

⁸ See “Skills Based Hiring” from ACCT: <https://www.acct.org/center-for-policy-practice/skills-based-hiring>

⁹ Pierce, Dennis. “Skills Not Frills: A Shift in Hiring Could Raise the Value of Community Colleges”*m* Community College Journal, V.93, 2023: <https://eric.ed.gov/?id=EJ1374644>

development of key technologies through consortiums of universities, technology companies, economic and workforce development agencies, and community colleges. Historically, community colleges have not been included in these types of federal science and technology investments. Each of the 10 NSF Engines include community colleges who are at the table with other partners and charged with developing programs for emerging occupations and building the pathways into them.

NSF is also working with community colleges to develop programs in artificial intelligence and quantum computing through the National Applied Artificial Intelligence Consortium, led by Miami-Dade College, Houston Community College, and Maricopa Community College.¹⁰ The Department of Commerce's Regional Technology and Innovation Hubs (Tech Hubs) grants are similarly designed to give community college students a front door into good jobs in the tech economy.¹¹ These investments are all examples of how we can expand pathways into the middle class well beyond what exists today.

Tackling the Completion Challenge: Five Evidence-Based Practices

No matter how good the offerings at a community college, if students cannot complete their programs, they will be of little help in expanding pathways to the middle class. In 2024, about 43 percent of community college students completed their associate degrees in six years.¹² There are many reasons that completion rates at community colleges are low compared to their four-year counterparts, not all of which point to any failure on the part of the college. These institutions are open access and highly affordable. Many

¹⁰ See <https://www.mdc.edu/naaic/>

¹¹ See "Colleges Are Featured in 12 Tech Hubs Awarded \$504 From Fed", *Forbes*: <https://www.forbes.com/sites/michaeltietzel/2024/07/02/colleges-are-featured-in-12-tech-hubs-awarded-504-million-from-feds/>

¹² See <https://nscresearchcenter.org/yearly-progress-and-completion/>. At public four-year universities, the bachelor's degree complete rate in six years was over 70 percent.

students enroll in courses to explore their options or pick up some specific skills, without the intention of completing a degree.¹³

That said, over the last decade the sector has taken the completion challenge head on and made significant efforts to improve the completion rates of students who do wish to earn a degree. Indeed, we have a growing body of evidence on what works for helping community college students complete their degree. Here are five of those strategies:

Data-Driven Strategies

Few innovations have had a greater impact on how community colleges operate than choosing to embrace data-driven approaches to identifying gaps in student progress. For many decades, colleges lacked detailed information about which students were getting stuck and when and why they were dropping out. They also lacked specifics on achievement gaps between different groups of students based on race, ethnicity, sex, socioeconomic status, or enrollment intensity. The data that were collected were often used more for reporting and compliance purposes than internal learning and institutional improvement.

Today, many colleges have developed sophisticated institutional data systems that allow them to analyze student progression and performance at a granular level and to identify the points at which students are particularly vulnerable to stop out and identify trends in student achievement or decision-making. This “data mindset”, in turn, provides

¹³ See here for information on “skills-builders” - students who purposefully take a few courses at a community college: <https://economic-mobility.wested.org/project/skills-builders/>.

foundation for college leaders to develop new advising models, course sequences, and program offerings - and those reforms are generating better student outcomes.¹⁴

Industry and Sectoral Partnerships

A growing body of evidence indicates that when community colleges partner with local industry they can better align their career and technical education with the needs of employers which, in turn, leads to higher employment outcomes for their students. Sectoral partnerships bring together multiple employers in a specific industry sector to assess their shared talent development needs and work with local education providers and workforce and economic development agencies to meet them.

Los Alamos Community Colleges in Texas has one of the most successful sectoral partnerships in the country. Working with Project Quest¹⁵, a local intermediary organization that has organized healthcare employers across the region, the college provides pathways into entry level healthcare positions that are family-sustaining. Multiple evaluations of the partnership have found that it has generated enduring positive employment and earnings outcomes for graduates that far exceed the outcome from other education providers. Other rigorous evaluations of sector strategies have also found consistently positive impacts on employment outcomes for program graduates.

Career Pathways

With hundreds of different course offerings, majors, credentialing opportunities, financial aid programs, student services, and more, students can get lost in the many

¹⁴ See "A New Data Mindset: Creating Equitable Student Outcomes and Vibrant Communities" *EDUCAUSE*: <https://er.educause.edu/articles/2024/2/a-new-data-mindset-creating-equitable-student-outcomes-and-vibrant-communities>

¹⁵ See <https://questsa.org/>

options available to them or be unaware of potential support. They may also struggle to know exactly which courses they need and end up paying for more than necessary.¹⁶

Career pathways strategies - also called guided pathways¹⁷ - provide students with structured programs of study in which courses are clearly sequenced and students know exactly when to enroll in specific courses and where they are on their path toward graduation. These structured pathways take the guesswork out of course selection and minimize the risk of students taking courses that will not transfer to a four-year institution or delay their graduation.

There is a growing body of evidence that these more structured programs that include access to advising and other supports, significantly improve graduation rates. The Accelerated Study in Associate Programs (ASAP) program developed by the City University of New York (CUNY), for example, has been successful at moving students from developmental courses, into and through associate degree programs in three years.¹⁸ An experimental evaluation that began in 2009 showed that ASAP nearly doubled graduation rates. Those early studies have been replicated and found similar results.¹⁹

Student Supports

¹⁶ See "Using Data Mining to Explore Why Community College Students Earn Bachelor's Degrees with Excess Credits", Community College Research Center, Columbia University: <https://ccrc.tc.columbia.edu/publications/using-data-mining-explore-why-community-college-transfer-students-earn-bachelors-degrees-excess-credits.html>

¹⁷ See <https://ccrc.tc.columbia.edu/research/guided-pathways.html>

¹⁸ See "Accelerated Study in Associate Pathways: Fast Facts: https://www.cuny.edu/wp-content/uploads/sites/4/page-assets/about/administration/offices/student-success-initiatives/asap/evaluation/CUNY-ASAP-and-ACE-Fast-Facts_April-2024_WebFinal.pdf

¹⁹ See MDRC study "Increasing Community College Graduation Rates: A Synthesis of Findings on the ASAP Model from Six Colleges Across Two States": <https://www.mdrc.org/work/publications/increasing-community-college-graduation-rates>

Community college students are less likely to complete their programs because many of them are facing a host of financial and practical challenges to staying in school. More than 80 percent of community college students work in addition to studying; nearly 43 percent have full-time jobs.²⁰ Two out of ten community college students are parents to young children, and more than half of parenting students are also working full-time.²¹ Many other students are primary caregivers to parents or grandparents. Community college students are also more likely to come from low-income households that may struggle to cover the costs of basic needs - housing, transportation, food, and healthcare.

Each of these factors contribute to the lower completion rates at community college. Students who study part time and/or work full-time are significantly less likely to graduate than students who take a full course load each semester. The financial precarity of many students means that relatively small unanticipated cost, such as a car repair or rent increase, can force them to stop out their studies which, again, reduces completion rates.

Over the last decade, a growing number of community colleges have implemented a wide range of services designed to meet the basic economic needs of their students. Holistic student support strategies, for example, recognize the importance of understanding the specific needs of individual students across a range of both academic and personal domains - and of training college advising staff in how to identify those needs.²² Dal-las College's Stu-dent Care Net-work, for example, con-nects stu-dents to wide range of support services from enroll-ment through grad-u-a-tion including rental

²⁰ See Community College FAQs: <https://ccrc.tc.columbia.edu/community-college-faqs.html>

²¹ See Spark Collective: https://studentparentaction.org/assets/r-file/2-Undergraduate-Student-Parents-at-Community_final.pdf

²² See "Holistic Student Supports", Achieving the Dream: <https://achievingthedream.org/areas-of-expertise/holistic-student-supports/>

assis-tance, emer-gency hous-ing, men-tal health coun-sel-ing and on-cam-pus child care.²³ Broward College in Florida has gone a step further with its Broward UP program which brings the college into the neighborhoods from which the fewest number of students were enrolling, making courses available through local community-based organizations.²⁴ A growing body of research shows that student parents who are supported by their community colleges are more likely to graduate.²⁵

There is a growing body of evidence that holistic approaches to student services are paying off in the form of greater persistence and higher graduation rates. It is one of the most promising areas for expansion and additional research.

Earn and Learn Models

As routes to economic security have narrowed, one that remains strong is Registered Apprenticeship. These programs have all of the components of high-quality career education - they are demand-driven, based on partnerships with employers, provide a highly structured pathway to a good job, and include supports like mentorship and, most importantly, the opportunity to earn while learning. An effectiveness assessment by Mathematica found significant and long-lasting earnings gains—more than \$200,000 over the course of their careers—for individuals who completed a Registered Apprenticeship program compared to workers in the same occupation who were trained through other means. According to the study, nine years after completing their Registered Apprenticeship program, participants made, on average, \$5,830 more than their peers. No other workforce

²³See “The Role of Community Colleges in Connecting Students to Careers: <https://www.aecf.org/blog/the-role-of-community-college-in-connecting-students-to-careers>

²⁴ <https://www.broward.edu/browardup/>

²⁵ See “Student Parents Who Persist with Community Colleges Are More Likely to Get Help From Their Schools” <https://www.newamerica.org/education-policy/edcentral/basic-supports-increase-retention-of-student-parents/>

development system, program, or strategy comes close to generating these positive and sustained returns.²⁶

Federal and state efforts to expand apprenticeship into industries beyond the building trades and across more communities have been underway for over a decade with strong bipartisan support. These investments have helped community colleges build their capacity to deliver apprenticeships programs and integrate them with their credit-bearing degree programs, allowing an individual to be an apprentice and a college student at the same time.²⁷ Community colleges have also found other ways to build earn-learn opportunities for students, through paid internships that are connected to a student's program of study and creative uses of federal work study. But much of this work is in early stages; more investment is needed.

The Need for More Federal Investment in High Quality Career Education

In a time of profound polarization, support for building more pathways into the middle class that do not require a bachelor's degree remains broadly shared. Strengthening the middle class and expanding opportunities for young people to move into rewarding and family-sustaining careers is not a partisan issue. But building those pathways takes resources. The evidence-based strategies I have shared with you for how community colleges can build pathways into the middle class for their students are straightforward, but they take effort and require resources to create, develop, and sustain.

²⁶ See "An Effectiveness Assessment and Cost Benefit Analysis of Registered Apprenticeship in 10 States: <https://www.mathematica.org/publications/an-effectiveness-assessment-and-costbenefit-analysis-of-registered-apprenticeship-in-10-states>

²⁷ See Community College and Apprenticeship: The Promise, the Challenges: <https://www.newamerica.org/education-policy/reports/community-colleges-and-apprenticeship-the-promise-the-challenge/>

There are many ways through which the federal government can target more resources toward these highly effective strategies. Here are four:

1. *Triple funding for the Strengthening Career and Technical Education Act (Perkins V).*

Our federal career and technical education system provides resources to community colleges to carry out all of the evidence-based practices highlighted earlier. Colleges use Perkins funds to improve their data systems, engage employers, hire advisors and career navigators, and develop work-based learning opportunities, among other things. But Perkins is vastly underfunded. In 2024, Congress appropriated \$1.4 billion for Perkins state formula grants, which fund CTE at both high schools and community colleges. That comes to less than \$700 million per year spread across more than 1,100 community colleges. What's more, the 2024 funding level is less than half of what we invested in CTE twenty years ago. If we simply restored the 2003 funding level, we would spend \$2.2 billion on our CTE system.²⁸ But even that is not enough given the urgency of building more pathways to the middle class that do not require a bachelor's degree. Tripling our investment in Perkins would still only cost \$4 billion, far less than other advanced economies invest in their career education systems.

2. *Fund the Strengthening Community Colleges Training Grants Program*

The Strengthening Community Colleges Training Grants program,²⁹ which Congress authorized in 2020, has been an invaluable source of support for colleges to create the sectoral partnerships and career pathway programs discussed earlier. Building on the

²⁸ See <https://www.govinfo.gov/content/pkg/PLAW-108publ7/pdf/PLAW-108publ7.pdf>. See also https://careertech.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/09/Perkins_CTE_Funding_Chart_2_2023.pdf

²⁹ See <https://www.dol.gov/agencies/eta/skills-training-grants/scc>

success of the Trade Act Assistance Community College Training Grants program, which a meta-analysis³⁰ found to have increased completion and employment rates among participants, these grants have allowed colleges to develop new sectoral partnerships and career pathways programs they otherwise would not.

There have been five rounds of Strengthening Community Colleges grants, but they still have only reached 270 community colleges - and not for lack of demand from the colleges. These grants are also providing a foundation for embedding evidence-based practices and extending new technical assistance tools to community colleges. For example, the most recent round of grants required colleges to show how they would ensure that their career pathways were leading to good jobs (i.e. those that pay living wages and provide some benefits) and pointed the colleges toward the opportunity occupations monitor tool developed by the Federal Reserve. Continued funding for this well-targeted grant program will allow more colleges the opportunity to develop and implement high quality career pathways for their students and expand our understanding of what makes for high quality programs.

3. Fully fund the Regional Innovation Engines and Tech Hubs.

Each of the 10 sites funded by NSF as Regional Innovation Engines is authorized to receive up to \$160 million to support these first of their kind regional coalitions of researchers, universities, community colleges, and private companies. These investments represent a tremendous opportunity to integrate community colleges fully into regional technology-based economic development efforts moving forward and to expand the range

³⁰ See "Estimating the Impact of the Nation's Largest Single Investment in Community Colleges": <https://www.newamerica.org/education-policy/reports/estimating-impact-taacct/>

of opportunity occupations for students at community colleges. A commitment to continued funding will help all the partners in each Engine make the most of this historic investment. The same is true for the Regional Technology and Innovation Hubs (Tech Hubs) administered through the Department of Commerce.

4. *Continue investing in Registered Apprenticeship expansion.*

Since 2015, consecutive administrations and Congresses have invested in expanding our national apprenticeship system into new industries. The *Bipartisan Infrastructure Law* and *CHIPS and Science Act* also included tax credits and other incentives for federal contractors to use Registered Apprenticeship. These efforts have been paying off as apprenticeships are emerging across the country and in many new sectors, such as teaching, healthcare, finance, and information technology. These investments should continue. Congress should explore opportunities to create more consistent funding to states to support Registered Apprenticeship through authorizing a formula grant program under the *National Apprenticeship Act* and administered by the Office of Apprenticeship at the U.S. Department of Labor.

Thank you for your time and kindly consideration of these ideas.

Mr. ADERHOLT. Thank you, Dr. McCarthy.

Mr. Parker.

Mr. PARKER. Good morning, Chairman Aderholt, Ranking Member DeLauro, and esteemed members of the subcommittee. I am Dennis Dio Parker. I am a senior advisor for talent development at Toyota Motor North America. And I wish to thank the subcommittee for conducting this hearing.

Workforce development is an extremely important topic for Toyota, and we actively engage in meaningful apprenticeships at every level of education. At the K-12 level, we launched Driving Possibilities, a \$110 million career readiness and community engagement initiative in 15 communities. At the post-secondary level, in conjunction with our dealerships, we partner with 38 community colleges and vocational schools to provide state-of-the-art, hands-on automotive diagnosis and repair education through our T-TEN program. We maintain a long partnership with the University of Kentucky that provides technology degrees in lean systems and computer engineering.

Today, however, I will focus on a leading example of engagement between industry and education developed by Toyota called FAME, the Federation for Advanced Manufacturing Education. FAME is a career pathway program whose goal is to produce globally competitive, entry-level technicians. FAME is revolutionary.

First, it reinvented the 2-year educational experience at the community-college level by reimagining the manufacturing curriculum, the education delivery model, and the classroom setting.

Second, it incorporates a deep engagement with primary and secondary education and a seamless set of continuing pathways leading to bachelor's and master's degrees.

Third, FAME focuses on developing the whole person who can be highly successful. In addition to the technical education, a robust soft-skills component and a powerful productivity component are incorporated into a 24-month curriculum, with students alternating days at work and days at school.

Fourth, FAME is developed and driven by employers. This overarching principle dictates many aspects of the program. Employers choose the college most suited to program success, help develop and approve coursework, visit high schools, recruit students, interview applicants, and structure on-the-job experience at the companies.

Developed by Toyota in 2010 at a school near our Kentucky plant, today FAME stretches from North Carolina to California, from Michigan to Florida, in 16 States, with over 45 community colleges and over 450 participating company partners. States like Alabama, Indiana, Kentucky, and Texas leverage the programs at multiple locations within the State.

At the national level, FAME USA is led by The Manufacturing Institute, the workforce partner of the National Association of Manufacturers.

FAME in Alabama demonstrates the program's effectiveness at developing a highly skilled workforce. With the \$12 million Federal grant awarded in 2019, Alabama expanded its FAME chapters from 1 to 11. The program's success caused participation to surge, now involving nearly half of the State's colleges and 125-plus employers.

Alabama became the first State to pioneer a second FAME occupational pathway, broadening the model's relevance. With a third pathway under consideration in California, FAME underscores its adaptability and success in addressing workforce shortages across multiple sectors.

Strategic Federal funding plays a crucial role in scaling workforce training programs like FAME. By allowing employer collaboratives to direct funds toward specific training needs, these resources help institutions to build facilities, acquire equipment, and hire instructors—critical elements for launching and sustaining high-quality programs.

Ongoing access to funding for capital expansion ensures that these programs can meet increasing demand without financial bottlenecks. Perkins Career and Technical Education funding, used for equipment purchases in educational settings, remains an essential resource. And additional Federal support through targeted workforce grants would further accelerate the ability to produce the highly skilled professionals needed to secure America's manufacturing dominance.

A strong manufacturing industry is fundamental to America's economic prosperity. I hope I have demonstrated how U.S. manufacturing and education partnerships can generate a world-class workforce pipeline.

This committee is uniquely situated to help sustain America's global manufacturing competitiveness to keep our economy thriving. The funding your committee authorizes can reinvigorate the foundation required to ensure America's long-term global manufacturing leadership.

I very much appreciate the opportunity to testify before the subcommittee, and I would be happy to take any questions that you have.

Thank you.

[The information follows:]

Testimony of Dennis Dio Parker

Regional Talent Development Consultant (internal)
Toyota Motor North America, Inc.

“Career Ready Students: Innovations from Community Colleges and the Private Sector”

SUBCOMMITTEE ON LABOR, HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES, EDUCATION, AND RELATED AGENCIES

Rep. Robert Aderholt (R-AL-04), Subcommittee Chairman
Rep. Rosa DeLauro (D-CT-03), Ranking Member

Committee on Appropriations
United States House of Representatives

February 12, 2025

Good morning, Chairman Aderholt, Ranking Member DeLauro, and members of the Subcommittee.

My name is Dennis Dio Parker, and I am a senior advisor on talent development in manufacturing at Toyota Motor North America. I want to thank the Subcommittee for conducting this hearing. Workforce development is an extremely important topic for Toyota¹, and we are actively engaged in meaningful educational partnerships at every level along the education pipeline.

At the K-12 level, we launched Driving Possibilities, a \$110 million career readiness and community engagement initiative across Toyota's operational communities to prepare youth for the careers of tomorrow while addressing root causes that impact learningⁱ. At the post-secondary level, in conjunction with our Toyota and Lexus dealers, we partner with 38 community colleges and vocational schools across the nation to provide state-of-the-art, hands-on automotive diagnosis and repair education through our Technician Training and Education Network (or T-TEN).ⁱⁱ We also maintain a 30 plus year partnership with the University of Kentucky that offers undergraduate degrees in Computer Engineering Technology and Lean Systems Engineering Technology developed in partnership with Toyota.

Today, however, I will focus on a leading example of engagement between industry and education developed by Toyota called FAME, which stands for the Federation for Advanced Manufacturing Education. This is a career pathway program whose principal

¹ Toyota has been part of the cultural fabric in the U.S. for more than 65 years and has created a tremendous value chain here, with a \$48.9 billion direct investment in the U.S. We have nearly 1,500 dealerships and more than 189,400 people working across the country.

goal is to produce globally competitive entry-level maintenance technicians for manufacturers.

FAME is revolutionary in many ways. First, it reinvented the 2-year educational experience at the community college level by reimagining the manufacturing curriculum², the education delivery model³, and the classroom setting⁴.

Second, it incorporates a deep engagement with primary and secondary education⁵, as well as a seamless set of continuing pathways leading to industry-relevant bachelor's and master's degrees⁶ for those who wish to go further.

Third, in addition to technical education, FAME focuses on developing the whole person who can be highly successful at work. A robust soft skills component, as well as a highly relevant productivity component, were incorporated into a 24-month curriculum in which students alternate days at work with days at school.

Fourth, FAME is developed by employers and driven by employers. This is an overarching principle that dictates many aspects of the program. Employers, for example,

² A three-pillared core curriculum is an essential feature of the FAME program: (1) technical skills, (2) professional behaviors and (3) manufacturing best practices. Technical skills include electrical, fluid power, mechanical and fabrication. The content is based on a factory task analysis and reflects industry needs and standards. Professional behaviors focus on initiative, diligence, communication and teamwork. There are five manufacturing practices, including safety, problem solving and workplace efficiency.

³ Participating colleges administer the FAME curriculum over five straight semesters (no summer break), an eight-hour instructional day, with two days at the college and three days at work.

⁴ The typical FAME "classroom" is a factory-floor-like advanced manufacturing center, equipped with state-of-the-art machinery.

⁵ A leading example of Toyota's partnership at the secondary level is the Toyota 4T Academy, a two-year education and manufacturing program that helps high school students discover manufacturing as a career path through customized class curriculum and hands-on production line experience. 4T curriculum includes classes on manufacturing, robotics, artificial intelligence, 3D printing, problem solving, leadership and teamwork, finance, and computer skills.

⁶ The FAME program partners with Northwood University, for example, to offer students a bachelor's degree in applied management, as well as master's degrees in organizational leadership or business administration.

choose the college most suited to program success. Employers help develop and approve coursework. Employers visit high schools, recruit students, and interview applicants. Participating employers also structure the on-the-job experience at their companies.

While initially developed by Toyota in 2010 at one school nearby our Kentucky assembly plant, today, FAME has scaled beyond the states where Toyota manufactures. It stretches from North Carolina to California and from Michigan to Florida. It is in 16 states with over 45 participating collegesⁱⁱⁱ and over 450 company partners. States like Alabama, Indiana, Kentucky, and Texas leverage the program at multiple locations within the state. At the national level, FAME USA is led by the Manufacturing Institute, the workforce partner of the National Association of Manufacturers.

The growth of FAME in Alabama is an example of the program's effectiveness in developing a highly skilled advanced manufacturing workforce. With a \$12 million federal grant awarded in 2019, Alabama rapidly expanded its FAME chapters from one to eleven. As companies and colleges witnessed the program's success, participation surged — now involving nearly half of the state's colleges and more than 125 manufacturers.

Alabama also became the first state to pioneer a second FAME training pathway, this one focused on process technicians, broadening the model's application beyond traditional maintenance roles. With a third pathway under consideration in California, FAME's expansion underscores its adaptability and success in addressing workforce shortages across multiple manufacturing sectors.

Strategic federal funding, such as resources allocated through the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA), plays a crucial role in scaling workforce training

programs like FAME. By allowing employer collaboratives to direct funds toward specific training needs, these resources help institutions acquire equipment, build facilities, and hire instructors — critical elements for launching and sustaining high-quality programs. Additionally, ongoing access to funding for capital expansion ensures that as these programs grow, they can meet increasing industry demand without financial bottlenecks.

Perkins Career and Technical Education (CTE) funding, traditionally used for equipment purchases in secondary and post-secondary settings, remains an essential resource, and additional federal support through targeted workforce development grants would further accelerate the nation's ability to produce the highly skilled professionals needed to secure America's manufacturing dominance.

As you know, a strong manufacturing industry is fundamental to our nation's economic prosperity. I hope I have demonstrated how U.S. manufacturers can effectively partner with the education sector to generate a robust, world-class workforce pipeline. This committee is uniquely situated to help sustain America's global manufacturing competitiveness and keep our nation's economy thriving. The funding your committee authorizes can, in fact, reinvigorate the foundation required to ensure America's long-term global manufacturing leadership. On behalf of Toyota, I urge Congress to reauthorize the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) in ways that support the expansion of highly effective employer-led workforce programs like FAME.

I very much appreciate the opportunity to testify before the Subcommittee. I would be happy to take any questions that you have.

¹ Through Driving Possibilities, Toyota partners with the following K-12 school districts and universities: Asheboro City Schools; Chandler Unified School District; Clark County School District; Dallas Independent School District; Evansville Vanderburgh School Corporation; East Central Independent School District; Fayette County Public Schools; Fulton County Schools; Guilford County School District; Huntsville City Schools; Lee County Schools; Lincoln Consolidated Schools; North Gibson School Corporation; Pontotoc City Schools; Scott County Schools; Tempe Elementary School District; and Ypsilanti Community Schools; Eastern Michigan University; Southern Methodist University; Texas A&M University – San Antonio Institute for School and Community Partnership; University of Evansville; and University of Mississippi.

² The current list of educational institutions partnered with Toyota through the T-TEN program include: Lawson State CC, Bessemer, AL; Gateway Community College, Phoenix, AZ; Cypress College, Cypress, CA; Citrus College, Glendora, CA; Universal Technical Institute Rancho Cucamonga, Rancho Cucamonga, CA; San Diego Miramar College, San Diego, CA; Ventura College, Ventura, CA; Atlantic Technical Center, Coconut Creek, FL; Robert Morgan Campus, Miami Lakes Educational Center, Miami, FL; Miami Lakes Educational Center and Technical College, Miami Lakes, FL; Orange Technical College, Mid Florida Campus, Orlando, FL; Universal Technical Institute, Lisle, IL; Ivy Tech Community College, Indianapolis, IN; Jefferson Community and Technical College, Louisville, KY; Earle C. Clements Job Corps Academy, Morganfield, KY; Massachusetts Bay Community College, Ashland, MA; Dunwoody College of Technology, Minneapolis, MN; Ranken Technical College, St. Louis, MO; Metropolitan Community College, Omaha, NE; Lakes Region Community College, Laconia, NH; San Juan College, Farmington, NM; Monroe Community College, Rochester, NY; Suffolk Community College, Selden, NY; Forsyth Technical CC, Winston Salem, NC; Stark State College of Technology, North Canton, OH; Oklahoma State University Institute of Technology, Okmulgee, OK; Community College of Philadelphia, Philadelphia, PA; Collin College Technical Campus, Allen, TX; Tarrant County College District, Fort Worth, TX; Dallas College, Eastfield Campus, Mesquite, TX; San Jacinto College Central, Pasadena, TX; Austin Community College, Round Rock, TX; Tidewater Community College, Chesapeake, VA; J. Sargeant Reynolds Community College, Richmond, VA; U.S. DOL Job Corps Program, Clearfield, UT; Shoreline Community College, Shoreline, WA; Spokane Community College, Spokane, WA; Clark College, Vancouver, WA.

³ The current list of educational institutions partnered with FAME USA include: Coastal Alabama Community College, Bay Minette, AL; Gadsden State Community College, Anniston, AL; Bishop State Community College, Mobile, AL; Southern Union State Community College, Opelika, AL; Drake State Community College, Huntsville, AL; Jefferson State Community College, Birmingham, AL; Wallace State Community College, Hanceville, AL; Trenholm State Community College, Montgomery, AL; Calhoun Community College, Decatur, AL; Wallace Community College, Dothan, AL; Northwest Shoals Community College, Muscle Shoals, AL; Reedley College, Reedley, CA; Pueblo Community College, Pueblo, CO; Daytona State College, Daytona, FL; John Wood Community College, Quincy, IL; Richland Community College, Decatur, IL; Vincennes University, Indianapolis, IN; Vincennes University, Vincennes, IN; Ivy Tech Community College, Ft. Wayne, IN; Ivy Tech Community College, Valparaiso, IN; Kansas City Kansas Community College Technical Education Center, Kansas City, KS; Bluegrass Community & Technical College, Georgetown, KY; Bluegrass Community & Technical College, Danville, KY; Jefferson Community & Technical College, Louisville, KY; Gateway Community & Technical College, Florence, KY; Elizabethtown Community & Technical College, Elizabethtown, KY; Henderson Community & Technical College, Henderson, KY; Somerset Community & Technical College, Somerset, KY; Owensboro Community & Technical College, Owensboro, KY; Southcentral KY Community & Technical College, Franklin, KY; Hopkinsville Community College, Hopkinsville, KY; Bossier Parish Community College, Shreveport and Bossier City, LA; Washtenaw Community College, Ann Arbor, MI; Itawamba Community College, Tupelo, MS; Guilford Technical Community College, Greensboro, NC; Oklahoma State University Oklahoma City, Oklahoma City, OK; Jackson State Community College, Jackson, TN; St. Philips College Southwest Campus, San Antonio, TX; Palo Alto College, San Antonio, TX; Richland College, Dallas, TX; Texas State Community College, Seguin, TX; Lamar State College Orange, Orange, TX; Mountain View College, Dallas, TX; BridgeValley Community & Technical College, South Charleston, WV.

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Institute
FAME USA

FAME BY THE NUMBERS

Over 45 Chapters in 16 States

450+
Company
Partners



College
Partners for
Every Chapter

1,300+
Students enrolled
2023-2024



2,200
Graduates since
2010

1,800+ hours of on-the-floor experience
for each graduate



90% of graduates proceed to direct
employment with sponsoring company

FAME Students Learn:

- Electrical/mechanical/PLCs/Fluid Power/Fabrication & more
- Lean principles and practices
- Professional skills for long-term impact

BENEFITS OF FAME PIPELINE

- Facilitates employer-led partnerships between your company and local educational institutions
- Initiates investment in your company and the next generation of advanced manufacturers
- Establishes a channel for recruiting diverse, high-achieving and career-oriented students
- Generates a continuous pipeline of global-best, entry-level multiskilled maintenance technicians



DEVELOP THE WORKFORCE OF TOMORROW TODAY

- The FAME model leverages a work/learn framework to weave technical knowledge, professional behaviors and distinct manufacturing core exercises into a focused co-op experience
- Graduates will demonstrate mastery in the Manufacturing Core Exercises (MCE's) of Safety Culture, 5S Visual Management, Lean Manufacturing, Problem Solving and Machine Reliability
- In total, students gain more than 1,800 hours of experience over the course of the program, working three days a week and attending class two days a week
- Professional behaviors and practices are introduced and reinforced throughout the program through a "learn it and live it" approach

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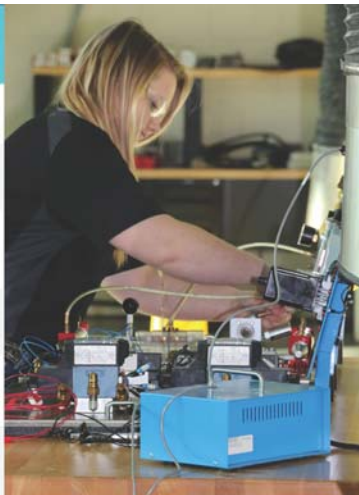
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A HISTORY OF DEVELOPING GLOBAL-BEST TECHNICAL TALENT:

- The Federation for Advanced Manufacturing Education was founded on June 24, 2010, in Kentucky through a partnership between Toyota and the Bluegrass Community and Technical College
- FAME is the new American model of skills training for modern manufacturers, recognized as the nation's premier manufacturing education program for students launching careers, workers learning new skills and veterans seeking new careers in manufacturing.
- Implemented with a college partner, FAME programs are a conduit between industry and education, providing companies with the skilled worker pipeline they need to remain globally competitive
- Since its inception, FAME has expanded to include chapters across manufacturing sectors and the country, training hundreds of world-class multiskilled technicians each year
- Over the past decade, FAME has become a trusted employer-led talent solution implemented by nearly 500 company partners

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Mr. ADERHOLT. Thank you, Mr. Parker.

And let me begin with you. I know Toyota has developed two world-class talent development programs—AMT, which you described, and also—is it T-TEN?

Mr. PARKER. Yes.

Mr. ADERHOLT. I hope I am saying that right—which supports automotive dealers across the country.

Despite this verified success in creating training programs, Toyota relies on a decentralized approach to recruitment and to talent development. Can you talk a little bit about the advantages of this decentralized approach that Toyota uses?

Mr. PARKER. Let me clarify. What do you mean by the “decentralized approach”?

Mr. ADERHOLT. Well, just as opposed to actually one centralized location where you use it. You have talked about different parts of the country and how each—you know, from California all the way over to Florida, to Alabama. And just a little bit about how that has been more effective than from top to bottom, the decentralization of that program.

Mr. PARKER. Thank you. That clarification helps.

Well, we feel this—and this principle expands across this program and others in many ways. We feel that the best decisions for employment and gaining the best fit for workers, which feeds everyone’s success, are best determined by local plants working with their local communities.

Now, in a program like FAME—that is the one we referenced that had the scale that you mentioned. In a program like FAME, we have guidelines that all of those locations would observe, but then, in applying those guidelines locally, they would make those local decisions. And they can best staff our plants with that local control.

Mr. ADERHOLT. Gotcha. All right.

Dr. Karolewics, many of us have heard from employers—I would say pretty much everybody, probably, on this subcommittee—about need to find workers, especially in the competitive labor market. And there is a need to ensure that what students are learning aligns with the job demands.

And can you tell us a little bit more about Wallace State and how it has aligned its programs and majors to match what employers are actually looking for, especially for these in-demand fields?

And, second of all, talk, maybe, about students. Are they staying in the Hanceville, Cullman County area or the broader region after they graduate because they are connected to those good jobs that are in the market?

So could you talk about those two things, please?

Ms. KAROLEWICS. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I would be happy to answer that question.

The first, I would say, yes, that our students—because we are the community’s college—that is what community colleges are—our students do predominantly stay in our region. And we want them to, simply because we need that talent pipeline for our employers in our region.

Our programs are very closely tied to labor market outcomes. We regularly assess the new and emerging careers. We assess our top

10, top 20 occupations, what the labor market outcomes are for those, what the salaries are, and we align our programs to that. Because, ultimately, we want our students to have those good jobs that pay the living wage.

I am sorry, could you repeat that question, the middle part of the question?

Mr. ADERHOLT. Oh, yes. Tell us a little bit more about how your programs are aligned to match what employers are actually looking for.

Ms. KAROLEWICS. Yes. We regularly assess that labor market data and make sure——

Mr. ADERHOLT. Right.

Ms. KAROLEWICS [continuing]. That we are teaching the skills that our students need to be successful in the workforce.

And we include the earn-and-learn opportunities in there, to the extent that we can. It makes such a difference for a student who comes from poverty to have an opportunity to make a living wage while they are working toward their associate's degree.

So those apprenticeships and internships—we created a nursing apprenticeship, the first one in the State, which is a registered nursing apprenticeship, which allows students to work 2 to 4 days in a hospital while they are working on their associate degree in nursing. That is a life-changing opportunity for a single mother.

And, you know, Alabama has, Mr. Chairman—Alabama has a higher rate of poverty than the United States. We have a lower rate of labor force participation than the United States. And so lifting people out of poverty requires being able to connect them to good-paying jobs. And we do that through the earn-and-learn opportunities, for the most part.

Mr. ADERHOLT. And, as you say, you know, just to clarify that, about that your students are staying in the Cullman area——

Ms. KAROLEWICS. Yes.

Mr. ADERHOLT [continuing]. Because of the job demand and also just because they want to stay closer to home as opposed to traveling off.

Ms. KAROLEWICS. They do contribute to some of the out-migration numbers that our Economic Development Agency would report to you. Because if we get a student through the FAME Advanced Manufacturing Technician—the AMT program that we talked about, if a student finishes that program, they are going to go to work at Mazda Toyota or Honda, which is a commute. It is a 45-minute or an hour commute. And so they out-migrate to jobs that pay more, and then they come back and spend their money in the Cullman community, which is what we want them to do.

But, ultimately, 96 percent of our student body in the community colleges in the State of Alabama are Alabamians. Up to half of the universities are educating students from outside of the State, and they are more likely to return to their home communities. But ours are a part of our community because it is their home community. So, yes, they stay with us.

Mr. ADERHOLT. Well, a 45-minute commute around here is not much at all, so——

Ms. KAROLEWICS. That is easy, isn't it?

Mr. ADERHOLT. Yeah, so that is——

Ms. KAROLEWICS. Yes, sir.

Mr. ADERHOLT [continuing]. Understandable. Okay.

Ms. DeLauro.

Ms. DELAURO. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I just wanted to just say, I want to just thank you for talking about how, in fact, the Federal resources, the grants, et cetera, are giving you viable opportunities to help give young people a pathway to a future. And so we are grateful for that, to understand the value of what we do and its success rate. So I thank you, to both of my colleagues who—you guys who just spoke.

But let me just—because several of the witnesses testified how WIOA, the training programs, are vital. They are vital sources of funding for workforce training and developed and implemented at community colleges.

And despite the needs for these funds, it is alarming: The bill that the majority has come up with, 2025 funding bill, eliminates that WIOA youth job training program, denied training and employment services for 134,000 youth who face barriers to finding a good-paying job. The cuts to WIOA adult job training would deny job training and employment services for 250,000 adults facing the same barriers.

Dr. McCarthy, explain how community colleges access and the utilization of WIOA funding helps job seekers. How would the eliminations and cuts to the program proposed here impact community college students who are benefiting from the grants?

Ms. MCCARTHY. Thank you, Ranking Member DeLauro, for the question.

And I will just say, I mean, eliminating the WIOA Youth Program would just be catastrophic for many communities, where, for many young people who are neither in school or working, it is our public workforce system that provides that point of connection either to school or to work or, best of all, to both. So it is hard to even imagine how we could think that this was a good idea. It is deeply self-defeating.

At the Center on Education & Labor at New America, we have done quite a bit of research on how community colleges and the public workforce system work together. And, again, you know, these are things that could be improved, but when community colleges and their local workforce development boards are able to work together, they are able to really capitalize on one another's strengths.

We have seen some excellent examples, for example, in the State of New Jersey, where in Rowan College of South Jersey, the workforce board and the community college share staff—

Ms. DELAURO. Uh-huh. Uh-huh.

Ms. MCCARTHY [continuing]. And the American Job Center is located on campus. This allows them to work together and to leverage the workforce system's resources for building sectoral partnerships and engaging employers with the community college's deep expertise on how to serve students, particularly students who might need extra supports or developmental education.

In Morris County, New Jersey, the workforce system in Morris County College of New Jersey are collaborating on the creation of a registered apprenticeship program that also leads to an associ-

ate's degree, perhaps similar to what you have at Wallace State. The workforce system is a little bit more closely connected to our registered apprenticeship system, generally, than community colleges, so they can be an important intermediary.

And in the State of Kentucky, too, we have seen fantastic partnerships between workforce boards and community colleges. Just a very quick one: Jefferson Community and Technical College has a project-based partnership with their local workforce board that moves students away from the really short individual training accounts that are just sort of a quick 8 weeks of training and into longer-term programs that lead to those good, family-sustaining jobs.

This is not the time to be cutting our workforce development system. Our employers face worker shortages. People are having a hard time finding a way to those good jobs. That is what the system is for. And when it works together with community colleges, they amplify each other.

Ms. DELAURO. Thank you.

Let me just ask Dr. Parker here, because I read your testimony carefully. Page 4 of your testimony says, "Strategic federal funding, such as resources allocated through the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act, plays a crucial role in scaling workforce training programs like FAME."

And it sounds good. Advanced manufacturing is where we should be going.

"By"—and that is a workforce development board—"allowing employer collaboratives to direct funds toward specific training needs, these resources help institutions acquire equipment, build facilities, hire instructors—critical elements for launching and sustaining high-quality programs."

So, what a collaboration that you have going here. If you eliminate WIOA for job seekers nationwide, what does that mean for this collaboration of, you know, community colleges and the goals that you are trying to meet?

And I compliment Toyota, I compliment businesses these days in that function. It is now for the first time that we see business and community colleges, et cetera, uniting to say, what is the best course for a person to take to help them realize their goals?

Mr. PARKER. So, certainly at our FAME chapters that we have and the FAME program, funding, for example, that comes through or via WIOA, that is very helpful, as I had testified.

Looking at the larger ramifications of what that loss of funding or that change of funding might be would be difficult to estimate for any given chapter, because, again, it goes with that principle I mentioned earlier: Each chapter works out their unique chemistry that they have.

Certainly, Federal funding is very important to what we do. It helps us to accomplish outcomes. We would be paying a lot of interested attention to how that continues to be orchestrated.

I am not sure I could give an answer that would be exactly true or exactly representative for every chapter's situation.

Ms. DELAURO. Uh-huh. Thank you. I think we have done well at the Federal level in, you know, being able to appropriate dollars that allow youngsters and single parents, as you have talked about,

probably mostly women, that can climb that ladder—climb that ladder to success.

Thank you very, very much.

And thank you, Mr. Chair.

Mr. ADERHOLT. Mr. Moolenaar?

Mr. MOOLENAAR. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Cooper, you, in your testimony, talked about Virginia FastForward, a program, I believe, that you are familiar with that gives a credential for workforce development in high-demand areas.

You also mentioned the Pell program, the Pell grant, really doesn't have the flexibility to be used in a program like that. Is that accurate?

Mr. COOPER. That is right. So the Pell grant program has a minimum of 15 weeks—that the programs that need to be funded need to be at least 15 weeks in duration and at least 600 clock-hours. But a number of the short-term training programs that lead to industry-recognized credentials that Virginia FastForward supports are not eligible for Pell grant funding because of that restriction.

Mr. MOOLENAAR. So, if you were going to design a new Pell criteria that would give that kind of flexibility, how would you design that?

Mr. COOPER. I would certainly lower the minimum number of weeks, the minimum number of clock-hours. We could probably have a debate about the exact number. The Bipartisan Workforce Pell Act says 150 clock-hours, 8 weeks, which would allow some Virginia FastForward programs but not all.

But I would also argue that that would have to be paired with some sort of outcomes benchmark to ensure that we are funding high-quality programs.

Mr. MOOLENAAR. Uh-huh. Okay. Thank you.

Dr. Karolewics, what are your thoughts on this topic? Because I hear quite often from people that we would like to have more flexibility in the Pell grant. And I know, you know, we have made it year-round, gave a little bit more flexibility. But do you have any thoughts on that?

Ms. KAROLEWICS. I do, as a matter of fact.

The year-round Pell has been a lifeline for most of our students. More than half of our students receive need-based financial aid, because, as I said earlier, we serve rural Alabama, and many parts of rural Alabama are in poverty.

So one thought in particular of an example that I could suggest is, like, the commercial truck-driving program.

So a living wage in the State of Alabama, in our region, is considered about \$40,000 a year. So we train commercial truck-driving classes on a non-credit basis—but we call it workforce credit, because every credit counts—and it is about a 4- to 5-week program.

So there is no way to have Pell provide for paying for that institution, so students have to figure out how to come up with it themselves. And that is very difficult for some of them to do.

But how life-changing would that be, to fund a program that has a more narrow number of hours, a more narrow number of weeks, to be able to put a graduate in a living-wage job? The average earnings for a commercial truck driver at entry level in the State

of Alabama exceeds \$60,000. That is life-changing, you know, for a single parent.

So Wallace State started a program that seeks to train persons who are wheelchair-bound or use a wheelchair. One of our most recent students came to us from the State of Colorado. He learned about our program. He was a veteran. He was hurt, paralyzed. And he came to us to reenter the commercial truck-driving world. We trained him, and on the day that he graduated, he had a job offer.

Mr. MOOLENAAR. Huh.

Ms. KAROLEWICS. And so, that is life-changing.

So short-term programs of a certain number of weeks and with certain kinds of outcomes, I very much support that—very much support that. Because it is not in a student's best interest to take a truck-driving program and make it a 15-week program. And I have seen that happen simply so that a student could be eligible for a Federal Pell grant.

Mr. MOOLENAAR. If I could follow up with you, you mentioned you are always assessing kind of what the workforce needs are. What tools do you use to do those assessments?

Ms. KAROLEWICS. We have national and local labor market data, so we study all of the different regions in the State of Alabama, the workforce regions, and we have very specific labor market data about that. So we look at professions that are contracting, professions that are growing, the high-wage/high demand professions, and we make sure that our programs are aligned with that, but not only the programmatic alignment, but also the curricular alignment so that we are teaching the skills that employers need most.

Mr. MOOLENAAR. And then, Mr. Parker, I just wanted to follow up with you on—from an employer's standpoint, and the collaboration that you have. With respect to the Pell Grant, are you finding that greater flexibility would create more options for you, or is that not really a—

Mr. PARKER. Yeah, it would absolutely create additional options. In my testimony, I noted that there are additional occupational pathways being developed with FAME, and I am just using FAME as an example. There is many valuable programs out there these principles would apply to. Some of those occupational pathways would take significantly less time to train and for the preparation completion to be attained, and when we have reached those and begin developing those, having more flexibility in those grants and who is eligible would certainly be very helpful.

Mr. MOOLENAAR. Okay. Thank you. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I yield back.

Mr. ADERHOLT. Mr. Hoyer.

Mr. HOYER. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. First, I want to adopt the remarks that Ms. DeLauro made in the opening comments. I think all of us on this committee, I presume, are supporters of the community colleges, its objectives, and its role that it plays in ensuring that we have skills training in America if we are going to be competitive worldwide.

I have been pressing an agenda since 2010 when I was majority leader, called, "Make it in America," which simply means both making sure we make things in America, including services, but also that we succeed in America, you make it. Three major compo-

nents of that program that I set forth were education and training, infrastructure, and entrepreneurship, making sure people know how to go into a small business that they can then grow into a large business and be successful in America.

At the same time, we are having a hearing on things I think that most of us support. What we are not having a hearing on is the undermining of the separation of powers, the checks and balances, and the ability of Congress to set policy and have that policy carried out. We essentially seem to be governing by executive order, both involving legislative and executive responsibilities. Personally, Mr. Chairman, I think we ought to have hearings on that.

Frankly, for the last 70 years, maybe longer, the authority of the Congress of the United States over those years has been diminishing, and accreting to the executive greater and greater power under both Democrats, Franklin Roosevelt, on forward. I think that is a challenge for our country.

And I think what is happening today demands, frankly, Mr. Chairman, that we have hearings on the usurpation unconstitutionally and illegally of the powers of the Congress of the United States, which, of course, under Article I are the policymakers, and the policy is supposed to be carried out by the President of the United States.

Now having said that, I am a big supporter of community colleges. As a matter of fact, the Community College of Prince George's County, which abuts the District of Columbia, was started in the same high school that I graduated from at night in 1957. I was elected to State Senate in 1966, and participated in the formation of the community college system in the late 1960s, and am a very strong supporter. And in fact, I had two community colleges in my district that have over 40,000 students. Ms. Karolewics, Doctor, how many students do you have?

Ms. KAROLEWICS. Not 40,000. About 8,000.

Mr. HOYER. About 8,000, so substantial size. Yeah, substantial size. And they provide a critical service.

Mr. Cooper, let me ask you a question, yes or no, but you can expand on it. Do you believe the Federal Government has a role in assuring that these community colleges, which have been created all over the country, do, in fact, lead to us being—having more a competitive stature because we are training people for the jobs that are needed to be done in a country like America to be competitive?

Ms. COOPER. Yes, I believe that, and I also believe that we see students actually voting with their feet going to community colleges that are providing direct pathways into the labor force. Community colleges with a vocational orientation saw a 14 percent increase in student enrollment just in the last year.

Mr. HOYER. Thank you very much. I share that view. And I want to ask Dr. McCarthy, Doctor, and perhaps Dr. Karolewics, you as well, as a matter of fact, is it Dr. Parker?

Mr. PARKER. It is Mr. Parker, but I appreciate it.

Mr. HOYER. I am prepared to follow the appellation of doctor. In any event, all three of you, how can we better coordinate, and you are all coordinating, because the workforce is changing so rapidly in America and indeed throughout the world, to make sure that we

are keeping up with offerings of—that are relevant not today, but five, 10, 15 years from today.

Ms. MCCARTHY. Yeah, that is one of the biggest challenges I think that our community colleges and just local development agencies face, and I think the best way to do that is, you know, when institutions have resources to be able to do the kind of labor market research needed that they are able to get out in front of those. We are supporting a group of community colleges that are part of the National Science Foundation's regional innovation engines. These are investments in regional economies around the country that are building next generation technologies, and community colleges are part of those consortia, along with their university partners and other economic development agencies. So we need to fund partnerships, and we need to give community colleges the resources they need to be able to look around the corner.

Mr. HOYER. Doctor.

Ms. KAROLEWICS. Yes, sir. Thank you. I would say continue doing what Congress has been doing over the years. I can give you examples of sources of funds that have really transformed the way that we serve students. One of those is of most recently the work grant, the workforce opportunities for rural communities. We use those funds and leverage other funds to begin a diesel by distance program. We are in north Alabama, as you recall, so our diesel by distance program was developed in an online format with virtual reality simulations, and then just-in-time learning so that students, when they finish their lab portions, then they also had earn and learn opportunities. But when they finish their lab portions of the curriculum, they can schedule time with us on nights or weekends to come and do lab checkoffs. We would not have been able to do that without the funding provided through the work grant.

So another example is through the Tack Grant. Many of you might remember the Tack Grant from many years ago. We started our very first delving into curriculum development with virtual reality and simulations. Simulations have changed the face of nursing education today. Title III. We are a caring campus and we used our Title III funds the last couple of years to develop that model for being a caring campus and serving the holistic needs of our students, so the thing that you have been doing are the things that I would recommend you continue to do because they work.

Mr. HOYER. Dr. Parker.

Mr. PARKER. I think one of the most important answers to this, or one of the most important solutions, not the only solution, is to more highly engage employers in the process, so looking at the coordination how we can better cooperate. And so, where you have—where you have employers leading the activity, or leading the program, they are, by the very nature of what they are doing, they are involved, they are engaged, and they are helping to make things happen, and when you look at where the churn of the economy occurs, it occurs in the workplace.

With that employer engagement, you are going to have—you will have better communication between them and education. That, in turn, will produce stronger programs, better prepared students, and that will complete a cycle into the place of work where they will produce better work with stronger outcomes. Good for the

American economy, good for the local economy. The key, I think, is how do you get that employer engagement to become the glue for those activities.

Mr. HOYER. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. ADERHOLT. Ms. Letlow.

Ms. LETLOW. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. It truly warms my heart when our educational institutions and private sectors partner together to ensure students are ready and fully prepared to meet the critical workforce need. Public private partnerships are the answer, and I am so excited about today's hearing.

I want to share, I want to brag a little bit about my own district. One example happening in my own backyard is Louisiana Delta Community College came together with the Northeast Louisiana Power Cooperative and Workforce Development board 83 to create an intensive 16-week program that fills a critical need for line workers in the energy sector, and you can imagine in Louisiana we desperately need those. And this high-quality, short-term workforce training program graduated their first cohort of 10 students last fall. A new cohort of 60 students just completed their training last week, and a third cohort is expected to begin in March.

The LDCC program benefits from direct funding from our committee, supplemental State funding, and additional resources for equipment and scholarships through several electric and power companies, including Entergy, Northeast Louisiana Power Cooperative, and Chain Electric. There are four total programs like this one across the State of Louisiana. I am a strong advocate for career and technical education funding and a variety of other workforce programs, and hopefully, one day, we can all come together and in agreement expand Pell Grants for these types of short-term workforce programs that we have already discussed.

My first question is to you, Dr. Karolewics. You come from a rural area of Alabama similar to mine. I imagine your community college as well as students face different challenges than institutions located in urban areas. As I visited these schools throughout my district, I have heard they often do not have the funding to resources to hire professional grant writers to help them through a complex and burdensome grant process. Is this something that your institution is facing and how can we be better partners in helping you identify grants?

Ms. KAROLEWICS. Thank you, Congresswoman Letlow. My institution particularly is not facing a crisis with regard to grant writers. We have been very successful in the grant space over the years, but I do know other institutions in the State of Alabama are because they have finite resources and they just don't have the funds to be able to staff that position. We have tried to address that in the State of Alabama through our system office by sharing grant writers that are employed at the system level to help them reach into the grant space. And so to the extent that you could help, that would be useful. Very much so.

Ms. LETLOW. It is my concern that the money is not reaching the rural communities as it is intended. I was encouraged to hear that you are using some of the programs, especially at the Department of Labor's workforce opportunity for rural communities and other rural focus priority areas with grants. Do you feel like these pro-

grams help level the playing field to make sure that that money is getting to rural areas as opposed to urban?

Ms. KAROLEWICS. Absolutely. We serve a four-county area, and we have 8,400 students in fall semester. The population of the town—our hometown is 3,300. We serve another county, Winston County, Chairman Aderholt knows it well. There are problems with transportation. There are problems with childcare. We are in the middle of a childcare desert. So if you are a single mother like the diesel by distance program that I mentioned a minute ago, our very first student enrolling in that program was, we developed it, was a single mother from south Alabama who was place bound, and that grant and our development of the curriculum that would meet her where she was changed her life. Because not only did she achieve her dream, if you will, of becoming a diesel technician, but she—it led to intergenerational change for her family. And so that is where the greatest impact is made.

In rural Winston County, it is about a 55-minute drive to our campus. If a student does not have a car, they certainly can't get to campus. So making learning accessible to them makes a lifetime of difference to them and to their family.

Ms. LETLOW. Thank you for your response. It looks like I am running out of time.

I yield back, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. ADERHOLT. Mr. Pocan.

Mr. POCAN. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thanks to the panelists. Unfortunately, and this is not directed to the chairman, but to perhaps what we are doing in Congress right now, there is an incredible congressional tone deafness to the moment that we are all in. I mean, we literally are raking leaves while there is a forest fire behind us and ignoring what is actually all going on and having a hearing like this today when we have this incredibly slow pace of bills before the Congress. Yesterday, we voted on a PQ and a rule, not even a bill. A PQ and a rule, because we are so unaware of the surroundings around Congress. We have no continued resolution after March 14th to fund the government, but we are debating about whether or not someone is at the table or not instead.

We just finally got a reconciliation bill this morning, which is already within minutes dead on arrival because one of your members already said that it is not going to happen and you can't give up more than one vote, so that process is for naught. We have got agencies being dismantled by an unelected billionaire and a guy named "Big Balls," while we are sitting here having a hearing unrelated to everything that is happening around us.

The chairman of the appropriations committee, who I have great respect for, was asked by a reporter about the freeze that is being put on by Federal agencies, again, by this unelected billionaire and a bunch of 19- and 20-year-olds, and he responded I am not a lawyer, I can't pontificate what is legal, but I suspect what is happening is what most Republicans would be supportive of. Appropriations is not a law. It is the directive of Congress.

The Constitution, Mr. Chairman, the Constitution actually says no money shall be drawn from the Treasury but in the consequence of appropriations made by law. We refer to the last year's minibus agreement as public law 118-42.

So we are ignoring reality on a regular basis here, and I apologize to the panelists who came here, because you are all talking about very important things, but we are ignoring the complete reality of everything going on around us.

In addition to this process and abdicating what appropriations is even about, we have got a constitutional crisis on the horizon. We have got court orders telling us that we have to allow USAID employees back, and we are still turning them back at the door. We have no resolution to that. This is what our everyday existence is in Congress, and we are having a conversation about counting the pebbles on a beach while there is a tsunami on the horizon.

So no offense to the panelists, because you are here on important issues. I am an employer. I've been for 37 years. But man, talk about tone deaf, right? I mean, we are ignoring the most important things impacting Congress and having hearings like this while we are basically saying the Appropriations Committee doesn't matter because there is an unelected billionaire that is going to do our job for us.

And by the way, an unelected billionaire who has Federal contracts, over \$20 billion of Federal contracts, which is nothing but leading to corruption. As Members of Congress, we can't have a Federal contract. As a Federal employee, you can't have one related to anything you do, and this guy right now is sitting on \$3 billion plus undisclosed contracts while he is turning on and off the levers of funding for Federal agencies. And we are talking about whether or not we have got enough people for the workforce and whether higher education is affordable enough.

So please give me a little patience with this, if you will, but I want to make sure I am utilizing your time. Can you answer this? Will any of these things help lead us to lowering the costs of higher education, or, for that matter, eggs or milk, or help us get more people in the workforce?

So far, here is what has happened. We have cut funding to poor people across the world. We have got someone stealing our data who is an unelected bureaucrat right now. We have changed the name of the Gulf of Mexico to the Gulf of America. We have talked about annexing Greenland. We are going to take over Gaza. We banned girls from playing in sports, and we blamed DEI for a plane crash at DCA. So if you can just really quickly, any of those things going to lower the cost of higher education or find more workers, Mr. Parker?

Mr. PARKER. That is outside the scope of my expertise.

Mr. POCAN. Thank you. Next, Ms. McCarthy.

Ms. MCCARTHY. Absolutely not.

Mr. POCAN. Okay. Doctor, I cannot pronounce your name, I apologize.

Ms. KAROLEWICS. Karolewics, and I couldn't speak to that, sir.

Mr. POCAN. Okay. Thank you. Mr. Cooper?

Mr. COOPER. I am afraid that is also outside my area of expertise.

Mr. POCAN. All right. Well, at least I got to use your time. I yield back, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. ADERHOLT. Mr. Clyde.

Mr. CLYDE. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. And thank you to our witnesses for being here today. I appreciate the opportunity to participate in today's important discussion on career readiness and the role of community colleges and technical institutions and private sector training programs in preparing Americans for the workforce. For too long, the conversation around education has focused almost exclusively on the idea that a 4-year college degree is the only path to success, but the reality is that for many Americans, particularly those looking to enter high-demand fields, technical and vocational education provide a faster, more affordable, and more effective pathway to a well-paying job.

Community colleges and trade schools offer critical training in fields where skilled workers are in high demand, and where wages often exceed those of many traditional bachelor of degree holders. These programs not only provide students with valuable skills, but also strengthen our economy by addressing the growing skilled labor shortage.

Federal spending in higher education has ballooned in recent decades, yet we continue to see disappointing outcomes in both student preparedness and workforce participation. Rather than throwing more money at a broken system, I believe we should focus on ensuring that existing funds are used effectively. Supporting programs with proven outcomes, fostering industry partnerships, and empowering students to choose the educational pathway that best suits their career goals.

Additionally, we must recognize the role of private sector training programs in filling workforce gaps. Many businesses are stepping up to provide on-the-job training and certification programs often at no cost to workers. These industry-driven models offer a market-based solution to workforce shortages without burdening the taxpayers with unnecessary spending.

I believe we need an approach that prioritizes career readiness, eliminates wasteful government spending, which I think is one of the things that DOGE is doing, and I applaud them for that, and embraces both community colleges and private sector innovation. America's students deserve educational options that set them up for real success with a well-paying job, not just a piece of paper.

So Mr. Cooper, first question for you. Community colleges and trade schools offer specialized training in the industries where skilled workers are desperately needed. In fact, in my own district, I want to call out Lanier Technical College, which boasts a 100 percent job placement rate for its graduates. 100 percent.

Given the overwhelming success of institutions like Lanier Tech, how do you think that we should better shift the conversation toward making technical and community college education an end goal in itself so we can get our people more expeditiously into the workforce so they can become productive for America?

Mr. COOPER. Thank you. Thank you for the question, Congressman. I 100 percent agree that a 4-year college degree should not be the only pathway and that community colleges, technical schools, vocational schools are absolutely a very promising pathway for students, not only because they deliver a direct pathway into the labor force, a direct pathway into higher-paying jobs, but they

also get people into the workforce faster with shorter duration programs.

And so, I have always said that I don't want to see the Federal Government putting its thumb on the scales in favor of one option over the other, that we should have, you know, regardless of which pathway students choose, as long as that is a high quality pathway that is going to lead to economic success, we should make the programs that are supporting education, you know, not discriminate between pathways across the board.

Mr. CLYDE. All right. Well, thank you.

Mr. Parker, Toyota and other manufacturers have demonstrated that they can successfully design and implement workforce training programs tailored to industry needs. In fact, Toyota Industries Compressor Parts America has a significant presence in Georgia's Ninth District. As you have noted in your testimony, Toyota has created a pipeline for workforce training through the Federation for Advanced Manufacturing Education Program which ensures students gain hands-on experience while simultaneously earning a paycheck. Programs like these show that the private sector is often better equipped than the Federal Government to provide targeted effective workforce training, so given the success of employer-driven models like what Toyota is doing, how can we make this stronger and more effective?

Mr. PARKER. I think one of the key things which you have just noted in your testimony that we have learned is that when we have, and this comes back to a common theme again, right? When we have very close employer involvement and employers know best what they need.

Mr. CLYDE. Yes, I agree.

Mr. PARKER. We know what works in the workplace. We know the skills that give us outcomes, business outcomes. When we have the close employer involvement and we work in conjunction with education partners, we bring a wider understanding of the problem. We bring greater expertise into the solution of that problem. We bring a different set of resources, and all together, we can craft those better answers.

What I might recommend is that the committee, through your work, and all of us in this common work for the Nation, is we look at how can we expand that effect. We are complete believers in the sense that an employer-led activity is what produces the best results in this collaborative environment.

Mr. CLYDE. Thank you, and I applaud Toyota for working in that environment and helping make that reality. Thank you, and I yield back.

Mr. ADERHOLT. Ms. Dean.

Ms. DEAN. Thank you, Chairman Aderholt. Thank you, Ranking Member DeLauro, and I especially thank you, our witnesses. I am new to this subcommittee, but you might imagine I am pretty delighted to be on the subcommittee, especially the focus today on education, educating our young people, our citizens. I say that because for 10 years, I taught at a university in Philadelphia. I was a member of an English department. I taught writing and rhetoric and ethics and business writing. It was joyful to see young people claiming their education. But we also saw the stress. We saw the

retention problems. We saw the cost problems. But mostly, it was a lot of fun.

I also am here as somebody who attended community college in my undergrad years. I wanted to make sure I stayed on pace affordably, and so, I went to my local community college. Shout out to Montgomery County Community College. It is excellent. And I also have Reading Area Community College in my district, so I know the excellence that community colleges bring to our young people and not so young people, to a diverse population. So it is exciting for me to be here on this subcommittee.

But I do want to share Representative Pocan's jarring disconnect between the greater conversation around how we appropriate and what we do around appropriating for our students, young and old, so that they have career pathways. There is a terribly jarring disconnect. I see with such grace the commitment you all have in making sure folks have a chance at the middle class or beyond, have a chance at a technical career, have a chance at a 4-year college, have a chance at even something beyond that, so that everybody has a chance.

And yet look where we are right now. In these last 3 weeks, we see, for example, I read with dismay as an educator, the first sentence of the chapter on education in Project 2025. It reads, and it is the first sentence. And I quote, "Federal education policy should be limited and ultimately the Federal Department of Education should be eliminated." No hiding it there. That is exactly right. Thank you, ranking member, it is page 319, as I bet most of you know, because this is important to you and to your work.

Dr. McCarthy, you said something like bewildered by attempts to halt funding. It is deeply self-defeating to cut into funding and connections between private industry and career pathways. So I share Mr. Pocan's jarring disconnect with what this administration, just 3 weeks on the job, is doing to eliminate the Department of Education among other things.

But let me go to something near and dear to my heart if you don't mind. It is the humanities. I am somebody who was an English major, and as I told you, I taught all different kinds of writing courses. But yet, we have to always recognize the importance of the humanities. Employers in my district express over and over again that they need people who can critically think, who can communicate, who can write well, who can communicate across all different bands of communications. These are emphasized in humanities programs, so maybe I will start with you, Dr. McCarthy. What is your thought on that in terms of career readiness? Let's make it match.

MS. MCCARTHY. Thank you very much for the question and I share your passion for the humanities. I do think too often we sort of have these—this pitting of, you know, career technical and sort of career-oriented education with more academic-oriented education. And the truth is the humanities matter for everyone, because it is through the humanities that we make meaning of what we are doing, right? And there is nothing more important than making meaning in your vocation and in your work.

I think when we look at really high-quality career and technical education programs, they often include a lot of background infor-

mation or context of what is this career, what is—what is it contributing to the broader society?

To your other point, all students, including career and technical education students, need those communication skills. They need to be able to write well and to be able to operate in our highly saturated and highly varied communication environment that we are in. So I am a big fan of the humanities, and there is a big place for the humanities in career and technical education.

Ms. DEAN. Could you speak, I have just limited time, but could you speak to Pell Grants? I had community college folks in Philadelphia Community College and my other area community colleges in talking about either flat funding or reducing funding to Pell Grants. What impact does that have?

Ms. MCCARTHY. Again, I can't think of anything more self-defeating for the country than for us to cut our Pell Grant program. This is the most important program to support low-income students to attend college. In reference to some of the earlier remarks, to make sure that every child, no matter what economic circumstances they are born into, have the opportunity to attend college, whether it is community college, whether it is CTE programs, or whether it is higher education. The Pell Grant program has been instrumental since 1965 in doing just that.

We would just be injuring ourselves and undercutting our basic social contract, which is that everybody in America should have an opportunity to be their best, and the Pell Grant is a critical building block of that social contract.

Ms. DEAN. I thank you. I thank all of you, and Mr. Chairman, thank you for giving me the time. I am certain that by cutting the Department of Education, eliminating the Department of Education, it is not just about eliminating dollars and resources. It is about an educated electorate or an uneducated electorate that you can control. I yield back.

Mr. ADERHOLT. Mr. Ellzey.

Mr. ELLZEY. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you all for being here. In my district, District 6, just south of Dallas, a little bit of Dallas, a little bit of Tarrant County, we have many outstanding community colleges and trade schools that provide hands-on specialized training directly relevant to the job market. We have 200,000 students between these four institutions, Texas State Technical College and Navarro College, which has a fantastic nursing program, Tarrant County College and Dallas College, all of whom partner with local businesses.

The State of Texas is growing at an enormous rate. We have data coming to our State. We have folks moving here from high-tax States. We have an incredible job market because we are a right-to-work State. And we have businesses that partner with our community colleges, and so the debate about Department of Education notwithstanding, I am so proud that businesses come to the State of Texas.

Toyota's got a huge presence in north Texas. Carbon, which used to be Triumph, which used to be Vought, which used to be another aircraft, they are building all the wings for the T-7 trainer that the Air Force and probably the Navy are going to use, and they partner with Texas State Technical College on welding and so many other

things, and so I am just really proud of everything that our community colleges do in our district.

I had five students from Dallas College in my office just 2 days ago, since they are all up here right now, and they came from a lot of different backgrounds. One student was from Nepal here on a student visa, and he went to a big private school in Dallas that was extremely expensive, about \$200,000 for a 4-year degree, and he said enough of that. I am going to start at community college where I could actually afford it and the return on investment is so much better for my money.

We had a single mom whose daughter turned 18 and she said I am going to go back and get my degree. I took care of her, now I am going to go take care of me. And then we had a couple other students who just, their paths vary, but community college offers so many opportunities for them, and we have just got so many great—so I just wanted call out folks in District 6 for that.

Mr. PARKER, before I ask your question, I see a pin on your lapel. Can you tell me about that? Are you a bubble head? For those wondering, this is not a pejorative. It is a Navy term for a submariner. Can you tell me which boat you were on, boats.

Mr. PARKER. For the subcommittee, yes, I am a submariner. I was on USS Ray, SSN-653, a fast-attack submarine in the Cold War, and we had great involvement, and I am a proud Navy veteran and a proud seaworthy.

Mr. ELLZEY. Well, thanks for doing that. Can you tell us any of those stories? You can't, can you?

Ms. DELAURO. And we—

Mr. ELLZEY. See, look, it's bringing us all together. Can you tell us any of those stories? You can't, can you?

Mr. PARKER. I will tell you the briefest one. In 1986 I was on the second longest run under the arctic gas tap. We spent 65 days under the ice and many times over it and longer in the Arctic, and I will just say that we executed an important defense mission that lives with us today.

Mr. ELLZEY. I am sure that is true. You guys are unbelievable. So let's talk about Toyota real quick. In your industry, what are you looking for? What is the biggest need for your industry in the United States today that community colleges can bridge the gap on?

Mr. PARKER. It is absolutely support with workforce acquisition. And so, we understand at Toyota that our company is no more and no less than our workforce and our people and the talent of our people and what they can do. That is all we are.

Mr. HOYER. Say that again. Say that again.

Mr. PARKER. Our workforce and our people—

Mr. HOYER. We are not treating our workforce very well. Thank you.

Mr. PARKER. The community colleges have a crucial role, and I will say, again, if we narrow this to FAME, which is the program we primarily use for our technical and soon other workforces, community colleges carry the load for that. That is who we partner with, and they make our company. So workforce, workforce acquisition is the biggest need that we have that is transformative for Toyota in the sense of my work with the company and what I do.

Mr. ELLZEY. Thank you very much. Dr. Cooper, real quick, I got 40 seconds left, so quick answer. Do you think that the return on the investment for the money spent on community colleges and associate degrees and even advanced degrees is greater than that of 4-year institutions, specifically private ones?

Mr. COOPER. For the most part, yes. I do want to emphasize that there is a range of outcomes within every degree category, and that we should be doing our utmost to support the good pathways over the bad.

Mr. ELLZEY. Well, I'll just—thank you very much. I will just close with this. Not everybody wants to go to a 4-year degree. I probably could have used a little seasoning at a community college before I went to the naval academy and got my rear end handed to me by advanced classes, but thank you all very much for being here. You provide a substantial service to the United States and our workforce. Thank you.

Mr. ADERHOLT. Ms. Watson Coleman.

Mrs. WATSON COLEMAN. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and ranking member. Let me just say that I am feeling a little bit encouraged by this committee, this subcommittee meeting. It is one of the few positive things we have been able to discuss and to agree that community colleges are so important to our well-being, our workforce, our lifting up people. And so, I therefore look forward to all of my members and friends on this committee voting appropriately when the time comes for the funding, because as it stands right now, we are in trouble.

And so, I am going to ask you all very quickly if this is an up or a down. These are some of the cuts that are being proposed by Elon Musk. Maybe President Trump if Elon allows him. Workforce development, \$1.3 billion; for WIOA State grants, a decrease of \$1.7 billion or 57 percent below 2024. The bill eliminates the funding for WIOA youth job training, a cut of \$948 million below the 2024 level. The bill includes \$174 million for adult job training, a cut of \$712 million below 2024; \$150 million for registered apprenticeships, Doctor—Madam President, a cut of \$135 million; student aid, \$455 million for the Federal Supplemental Education Opportunity Grant Program, a cut of \$455 million; \$650 million for the Federal Work Study Program, a cut of \$615 million; elimination of the childcare access means parents and school, a cut of \$75 million below the 2024 level. That was something that you raised how important that was to be able to allow women with children or just anybody with children to go to school.

These are some of the cuts that are proposed by this out of touch, I-don't-care-about-anybody administration. Will those cuts negatively impact those issues and those areas that you suggest are so important to the development of our workforce?

Start with you, Mr. Cooper, Doctor, Doctor, and Mr., and yes or no is a simple answer.

Mr. COOPER. Thank you, Congresswoman. I am afraid I am not familiar with the proposal you are referencing, so I can't speak to that.

Mrs. WATSON COLEMAN. Well, are you familiar with the amount of cuts?

Mr. COOPER. Which bill are you referencing? I am not sure I am familiar with it.

Mrs. WATSON COLEMAN. More than one. I just talked about hundreds of billions of dollars in cuts.

Ms. DELAURO. The appropriations bills. Five appropriations bills, which are supposed to deal with before March 14th. Take a look at the cuts and Federal work study and some of these other areas.

Mrs. WATSON COLEMAN. And think about how it impacts what you think is important to this country. So I will just have a yes or no from the rest of the panel, if you might. Because I do have a couple more questions I want to ask very quickly. Does it negatively impact you, Madam President, and your work?

Ms. DELAURO. I would need time to study the specifics in order to answer that.

Mrs. WATSON COLEMAN. Thank you. Dr. McCarthy.

Ms. MCCARTHY. Yes, it absolutely does.

Mrs. WATSON COLEMAN. Thank you. Mr. Parker.

Mr. PARKER. It is beyond my expertise and analysis to fully understand it.

Mrs. WATSON COLEMAN. Thank you very much. Your Toyota program, how many students are enrolled?

Mr. PARKER. I no longer lead that program. Toyota no longer leads that program. Manufacturing institute does. My understanding from an informal conversation is right now there are approximately 1,400 active students in chapters in the U.S.

Mrs. WATSON COLEMAN. To your knowledge, what percentage are black and brown students and women?

Mr. PARKER. I no longer have that number. The Manufacturing Institute—

Mrs. WATSON COLEMAN. Madam President, in your school, what are the—what is the percentage of black and brown students in your school?

Ms. DELAURO. About 20 percent.

Mrs. WATSON COLEMAN. What percentage of your students in your school are on some sort of Federal aid?

Ms. DELAURO. More than 50 percent.

Mrs. WATSON COLEMAN. Dr. McCarthy, in your testimony, you pressed on the importance of building pathways to the middle class, career and technical education programs which prepare students for a variety of jobs. Can you please explain to the committee how the President's absurd efforts to dismantle the Department of Education and gut some of the Department of Labor will have on these programs?

Ms. MCCARTHY. It will be resoundingly negative, Congresswoman, and these are drastic cuts that will really undermine the community colleges to deliver—to deliver the services to their students so that they can succeed. For example, the Federal work study program has been extensively studied and it does increase persistence and completion among the students who enroll in it. \$650 million out of the Federal work study program is two thirds of the program. That is astounding.

The campus program similarly, when students—when parents and students are able to access childcare for the students, it unquestionably increases persistent graduation rates.

Mrs. WATSON COLEMAN. Thank you for mentioning New Jersey. New Jersey has 21 counties and 21 county colleges, and I have four in my district. I even attended one. I love my county colleges. I am so glad we figured out how we could use them to educate workforces in the future that make this economy the best in the world.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I yield back.

Mr. ADERHOLT. Mrs. Bice.

Mrs. BICE. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and thank you to our panelists for being with us today. I first want to correct the record. It was mentioned earlier by one of my colleagues on the other side of the aisle that this President banned girls from playing in sports. That is wholly inaccurate. He banned biological men from playing in women's sports, and that was the accurate decision. I applaud that.

I also want to make a comment about the discussion of banning—I am sorry, dismantling the U.S. Department of Education. There are concerns about the effectiveness of the dollars that are being distributed by the U.S. Department of Ed. You have 4,400 employees with a budget of \$238 billion, and while I recognize that many of those dollars are going to grant programs, Pell Grants and others, I think that there are—there is an argument to be made that giving those dollars to the States and letting the States actually determine some of the best uses for those dollars may be a better alternative.

Now, focusing on the discussion at hand, I want to say thank you for the focus, Mr. Chairman, on this meeting today. I come from the great State of Oklahoma. We have a phenomenal career tech program. As a matter of fact, Canadian Valley in my district partnered—did a public private partnership with Halliburton to create a wind farm management program that would train young people graduating from high school in nine months to be a wind farm manager and make a very good livable wage in Oklahoma, so I believe in the programs that are being put forward with these public private partnerships.

Mr. Cooper, if I could start with you, Oklahoma has focused on workforce ready training in industries like aerospace, energy, and manufacturing. Based on your research, what are the most cost-effective ways to expand technical education programs without burdening students with debt and getting them immediately into the workforce upon graduation?

Mr. COOPER. Well, I would say community and technical colleges, vocational schools have an absolutely critical role here. That—we know that at community colleges the percentage of students who take out student loans is far lower than it is at 4-year institutions. And so if we want to get students into the workforce quickly with a minimal amount of debt, I would say shorter-term programs that are often offered by community and technical colleges, which lead directly to a pathway into the labor force are the best way to do it.

Mrs. BICE. Perfect. To follow up on that, your research focuses on the return on investment and higher education. I have a bill to Workforce and Education Partnership Act of 2023 that I filed that strengthens employer education partnerships to improve workforce

outcomes. In your view, what data-driven policies would be best to ensure these programs lead to high ROI job placement?

Mr. COOPER. Well, I would say that there needs to be some sort of test for outcomes in the programs that are federally funded. We need to make sure that when a program is getting Federal Pell Grant or Federal student loan funding that is leading to a good job at the other end of things, that we can't have programs which are federally funded which have 10, 20 percent graduation rates which are leaving students with poverty-level wages, which unfortunately there are too many programs that are federally funded that fit that category.

Mrs. BICE. Thank you for that. Moving on to Dr. Karolewics, can you discuss how serving rural community college—I am sorry, can you discuss how rural-serving community colleges like Wallace State use stackable credentials to improve student completion rates and job placements, and how can Federal policy better support the scalable workforce?

Ms. KAROLEWICS. Thank you, Congresswoman Bice. As I mentioned in the earlier remarks, we use lattice credentials that build upon each other that have value in the workforce. I gave you an example of like a practical nursing. We have done that starting at the non-credit level with a nursing support technician to a medication assistant who works in a nursing home to a phlebotomist. All of this is non-credit, right?

And so, then we move into the credit arena where a student who is pursuing a degree in nursing to become a registered nurse has a stop out at the third semester so that if life happens, as it often does with community college students who have families, who have jobs, who have lives that get in the way, they can still enter the labor market and make a living wage as a practical nurse, and then come back and finish their registered nursing degree when they have the opportunity to do so. We have built that in all of our workforce programs, which is about 60 percent of our college. With our liberal arts and transfer program, those students don't have a degree that has as much workforce value until it is paired with a baccalaureate degree.

Mrs. BICE. Thank you for that answer. My time is expired, but I just want to say quickly, thank you, sir, for your service. We appreciate you, Mr. Parker, and thank you all for being here today.

With that, Mr. Chairman, I yield back.

Mr. ADERHOLT. Ms. Frankel.

Ms. FRANKEL. Thank you very much. First, thank you to the panel. I actually think this has been a very important hearing and what I call a bubble of friendliness with some exception, but mostly it has been obvious that folks on both sides of the aisle understand the importance of our community colleges.

And I have—my community college in Palm Beach County, which actually is the home of our President, it is called the State College, but it is phenomenal. It has graduated thousands and thousands of thousands of students who go into the community and work in law enforcement and healthcare and auto mechanics and almost every job you can think of, ready to go and take care of their families. And you all—thank you for your passion for each of you. I really have been very impressed with what you have said today.

What you didn't say is also important. No one said freeze Federal funding. No one said cut the education budget. No one said get rid of diversity. No one said eliminate childcare for students. No one said get rid of Pell Grants. And that is why I am worried. I think some of us are worrying because there is some folks in the new administration who are taking, it seems, like a different path, and that is why I think it is so important. We are losing colleagues here today on the other side of the aisle, but this is why it is so important for Members of Congress to speak up and support what you are doing in our community colleges.

I wanted to ask—let me start with you, Dr. McCarthy, because everyone seems to be for investing in our community colleges. But it is not just about how we help an individual, correct? I would like you to talk about how our public investment in education helps the community, helps all of us in terms of prosperity, people paying taxes, going into their communities, being role models, and why it is important not only for the investment, but also to make sure that a diverse population is getting the opportunity.

Ms. MCCARTHY. Thank you for that question, as I was saying. Community colleges are community institutions and they have tremendously positive impacts on the communities where they operate. Vibrant communities with vibrant community colleges.

Community colleges, too, are even more than institutions of higher education, which sometimes can be kind of like little islands where they are. Not always, but sometimes they can be. Community colleges have extensive partnerships throughout the community. Those are the—those partnerships are the sorts of things that they actually do need funding for the institution to be able to develop. And so, another reason why it is so important as we are thinking about how we support our community colleges that yes, things like Pell Grants are very important, but so is direct funding to the institution itself, to things like the strengthening community college training grants or through the Carl Lee Perkins career and technical education program.

Just an example of just how community colleges enrich their whole communities is in a neighboring community of yours is Broward College, and the program, Broward Up. This is a program where the then President of Broward Community College, they did a study. They figured out where they were—where students in their district area were not coming from and why they weren't, and they went into these poorest districts of this area of Florida, pardon me for not knowing the name of the county, Broward County I guess, and established the college there. They didn't wait for the students to come to the college. They brought the college to the students, right?

These kinds of—this ability to sort of serve the community is something that is very special to community colleges. It requires resources, and it requires flexible resources for them to be able to do that. I hope that answers your question.

Ms. FRANKEL. Just as a follow-up, the importance of public funding versus the private institutions, and what is the difference, if anyone knows, between how much it costs these days to go to the public community college versus a private institution?

Ms. MCCARTHY. It is absolutely enormous. It is absolutely enormous. And there is no better deal in post-secondary education than community colleges. There is also less risk, frankly. Again, and to Mr. Cooper's point, community college students are less likely to end up with large amounts of debt. They do have pathways that the credits are more likely to transfer to other institutions. It is just a much better deal for community—for students. But again, that depends a lot on how well-resourced and funded the community college is itself, how strong it is as an institution, its ability to deliver on that promise.

Ms. FRANKEL. Thank you all very much, and I really—I look forward to our committee working together to really make sure that we are uplifting our educational institutions, especially these community colleges and that we work with our new administration to make sure we send that message to them. And I yield back.

Mr. ADERHOLT. Mr. Moore.

Mr. MOORE. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and thank you to the witnesses for being here. This is certainly a hearing that is important to me and my great State of West Virginia. I wanted to start off by pointing out a program that we did in West Virginia, and also, I would like to note that I am somebody who went to trade school. I used to be a welder. I actually started off in a mining operation and somehow got here.

But in any event, a program that we set up, and I used to be the State treasurer of West Virginia, was called the Jump Start Savings Program, and what this program allowed, and I found this in my own career, is that it wasn't so difficult perhaps paying for the education itself, but it was after graduation the incurred expense getting into the workforce.

Now, this might not necessarily be the fact certainly from Mr. Parker and Toyota and the program they have, but I give you an example in that field would be an auto mechanic. So when an auto mechanic comes out of school, they are paying for all their own tools, right? Those can be thousands, tens of thousands of dollars. It is very expensive to get going.

And we started this program called the Jump Start Savings Program that allowed individuals even before college, or pardon me, before trade school, to put money away to save for tools, equipment, licenses, certifications, and new business start-up costs of licenses. You can think of CDLs and things like that.

And this program I started, it really made a great impact, and it was actually endorsed by our trade unions and then also endorsed by our Chamber of Commerce in West Virginia, which is not common to have that happen. Because certainly there are requirements and needs not only with the trade unions, but also with our folks who are non-union in West Virginia.

And so this allows them to save money. We have hundreds of participants in this program already, but there are inherent barriers for a lot of folks to get going in the workforce. You are from a rural State like mine, and even though perhaps the unions might supply a lot of the tools and equipment that you might need, you don't have a vehicle, right? And that becomes difficult to be able to get around. We don't have public transportation in West Vir-

ginia. If you don't have a vehicle, you are not going to work. So we allow for them to be able to buy that.

Now, part of the—I will be introducing legislation to this effect. We had a lot of tax savings in terms of their income tax they could write off as they put the money in and deduct the money out. But we were trying to mirror it after the 529 college savings program, which you know the magic in that one is the capital gains tax not being there.

Now, they didn't pay capital gains tax in the State, but they still had to pay it federally, which is why we had the tax incentives. In any event, this is a piece of legislation that I am going to introduce that I think could really be beneficial to everybody across the country, but what are your thoughts and what are you thinking about those types of barriers of getting into the workforce, particularly people that are trying to go out on their own and work like me?

I thought at one point I was going to start my own kind of mobile welding business and—but it was really expensive and you would have that incurred cost there, and I didn't have credit because I was so young. What are your thoughts about that? And we could just take it in kind of sequential order here. And does this sound like a program like the Jump Start Savings Program that I am speaking about right here, something that you would be interested in looking more into and perhaps being supportive of?

Mr. COOPER. Thank you, Congressman, for the question. I absolutely do believe that we need to be thinking about those barriers that students face after college in terms of getting into the workforce. I often think there is not enough attention paid to what are those next steps, those next expenses that you need to undertake, particularly around licensing. You know, what fees do you need to pay for the license, you know, how long do you have to spend before you—if you have your education before you can actually work independently in that field. And I think that sounds like a very interesting proposal. I would very much be interested in learning more.

I would also note that one of the benefits of the 529 program is to provide a ready-made savings vehicle to get people thinking about, you know, these expenses that are going to come down the road so that they are not necessarily surprised with a huge bill that they are not able to pay. So I would absolutely be willing to chat more with your office about that.

Mr. MOORE. Now you just reminded me of something that was really interesting, because I ran the 529 college savings program for the State, and we found all this stagnant money where people just stopped going to college, and we created a free tax—tax free rollover where they could roll their 529 money into a jump start account, and then go to trade school instead where they stopped going to college because for whatever reason, they didn't see the utility in it. In any event, please, Madam President.

Ms. KAROLEWICS. Congressman Moore, I could see the tremendous benefits of having an investment such as that. I can think of one example from our college in particular. Cosmetology is often held up as a low-wage job, and it might be if you go to work for Super Cuts that is inside of Walmart, but most of our students are going to become entrepreneurs. They are not reflected in the wage data, because they are business owners. So having a fund available

to help them with start-up costs, as minimal as they are, makes a huge difference.

I have another example of a rapid training program that we have in Alabama called Skills for Success. We also have a foundation called Paths for Success Foundation which does just exactly those kinds of things. We had five men go through our heavy equipment class who ran a recovery program.

So the Paths for Success Foundation was able to buy some tools and safety shoes, and things like that, for them which made a difference to them, because they could not have done that on their own, so that sounds like an idea that is really worth pursuing.

Mr. MOORE. Yeah. And, to be clear, cosmetology—any of these—I mean, you could be a chef, you could be—it is all eligible in the State where we do it.

Ms. MCCARTHY. Congressman Moore, thank you for the question. And, again, I completely agree. This sounds like a very well-targeted proposal. We would love to explore it with you more. This question of how to help people with that transition, you know, into their career, which sometimes does require extensive equipment, is definitely one that is a problem, and I am glad to hear that you are addressing it. So, would love to explore more.

Mr. PARKER. Congressman, I think I would agree with the rest of the panel that when we can remove barriers to education and job advancement, it helps everyone.

In FAME, as an example, in our employer-led collaboratives, we actually cooperate with all the parties that are playing to understand what those barriers are and how we can work together, whether that is through a formal process or an informal process, to help students get beyond that.

In principle, I think we would support any action or act that would help to further remove those barriers.

Mr. MOORE. Well, thank you all for that. Thank you for the answers to the questions. And, unfortunately, you can't co-sponsor things, but maybe some of my colleagues, if they are interested, might want to think about it.

So, with that, I yield back. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. ADERHOLT. Okay.

Mr. HARDER.

Mr. HARDER. Fantastic. Thank you so much, Mr. Chair, for holding this important hearing. I think almost all members of this panel are in vehement agreement that this is a really important topic. So thank you for your leadership on this.

And thank you, everybody, for attending.

It really frustrates and breaks my heart when I spend a lot of time meeting with young high school students, community college students in my district and ask them what they are going to do after they graduate, and they look around and say, we are not sure we can find a job that really employs us at the wage we need across our district.

And then, right after that, I will spend time with our business leaders and ask them what is going on and what is stopping them from expanding across our region, and they will tell me, we can't find the employees.

And that is really frustrating, because essentially what we are saying is that the skills we are teaching in our high schools and community colleges are not necessarily the ones that our business community often needs. That matching program is really broken. And I think career and technical education is a really important part to make sure that we can fix it and make sure that the same things that people are learning in school are what folks are actually needing to get a route to the middle class afterwards.

We have a number of really successful programs already in our district, as many of the members here have already highlighted in theirs as well. San Joaquin A+ is a leading educational organization. They surveyed employees across the San Joaquin Valley recently, and 100 percent of the employers that they surveyed said that career education needed to be a higher priority for schools.

They have also talked to many of those employers about what is actually holding them back. Because the reality is, many of our employers are not participating in these programs because some of the barriers, either because it is too expensive and the cost burdens are too high or because of the red tape.

My office is exploring a number of ways to see what we can do to reduce those cost burdens, be them tax incentives for employers that are actually participating in career education—but I would love to hear from the panel.

I think a lot of schools want to do this and are moving towards this, but oftentimes it feels like the bottleneck towards progress is employers, especially employers a little smaller than Toyota, actually having the resources to move forward.

So what is stopping us on the employer side from more progress here? Anybody on the panel have an idea?

Mr. COOPER. Thank you, Congressman.

One of the big constraints is also on the supply side of colleges. There was a study done, actually, on the California Community College system which looked at changes in labor market demand for various occupations. And they found that students were very sensitive to changes in demand. When there is more need for healthcare workers, more students want to enroll in healthcare programs.

Unfortunately, there is not necessarily a supply response on the part of the colleges, that there is not more course sections being created, there are not more faculty being hired in these fields to meet that student demand.

And so that is why I would argue that we also need to be looking at the supply side of what community colleges are doing, perhaps creating more direct incentives, direct financial incentives, for schools to expand these high-demand programs and also have the capacity available to expand when necessary.

Mr. HARDER. Thank you.

Dr. Karolewics, any ideas of what we can do to support our community colleges expanding on that supply side?

Ms. KAROLEWICS. I think I probably don't have more to add than Mr. Cooper. I think he addressed that very well.

Mr. HARDER. Okay.

Ms. KAROLEWICS. Thank you.

Mr. HARDER. As a former community college instructor, I have a real heart for our community colleges, so thank you for the tremendous work that you do.

Dr. McCarthy.

Ms. MCCARTHY. Thank you, Congressman Harder. And it is such a great question and such an enduring challenge.

And, again, this relationship between the programs at the community college and what employers need, it is an ongoing, dynamic situation that needs constant conversation, which is—again, this is why it is so important that we be able to fund the kind of industry partnerships and sectoral partnerships at community colleges that are so important for maintaining those lines of communication.

I will say two things in response, too.

I think one of the things is that, in some of the really high-demand fields that are sort of in demand and where employers have a hard time retaining their employees, sometimes the work that needs to be done is on addressing the quality of the jobs for which they are having a hard time retaining their employees.

So I do know that California has done some really interesting work around High Road Training Partnerships and just, again, this question of: If the issue is that you are bringing people in and they are leaving really quickly, is that a skills problem or is that a job quality problem? So that is something that we need to look at.

I also think, again, practices like apprenticeship and on-the-job learning, they ask a lot of employers in terms of being able to develop those internal systems and provide the mentorship and register the programs. And, again, having a lot of resources available to support employers as they are doing that. It is also going to be hard for community colleges to go through those processes.

So, again, you know, right-sizing what is happening at the community college on the supply side with what employers need is just—it needs to be supported through constant dialogue on both sides. And I think our Perkins and our workforce development systems are well-suited to doing that.

Mr. HARDER. Thank you.

Mr. PARKER. I think, speaking from the employer's side, first, just, if I recall correctly, to answer one aspect of your question, what are some of the forces that may cause employers to be less participative—and you actually already recognized those. I can tell you that in the wider employer dialogue there is concern about red tape. There is concern about cost. We always think about cost. There is concern about what kind of resources it may take to support a program that is done in collaboration with that.

That being said, I am going to come back to something I have already noted several times, and I noted as such in my testimony too—and it is one of the transformative elements—is, employers coming together and working together. It is that employer collaborative.

So, among other things that occur when you have that, smaller employers that perhaps didn't have the resources or the scope or the experience to know how to work with this or to know how to approach it or to create something that could be sustained at the college, when you come together and you combine all of your re-

sources, then we have a critical mass that the college can address and work.

And then everyone benefits. Everyone, including all the employers, is engaged. Students are educated, and they fill those gaps. The dropout rate is lower. And so you see a number of dynamics that this collaborative effort comes together to do.

I might give one quick example just at a very high level. The FAME chapter in California is relatively new; they just announced a few months ago. Part of the dynamic that had occurred there, some of the employers that are now there and education have kind of grown apart. I don't know if they were in opposition, but employers certainly were not seeing a connection with it and were not—working on their own, to some degree.

The Manufacturing Institute came in, initiated a dialogue, brought those employers together, and that became the start of that new chapter in California. And now you are going to have this engagement that we have already noted from all parties that is going to actually produce something that is tangible with results.

Mr. ADERHOLT. Thank you.

All right. We won't do a second round, because we have gotten quite lengthy today, but I did want to close—Dr. Karolewics, it is my understanding that research has found that students that are doing dual enrollment are likely to finish sooner, or at least finish within 6 years.

I know you all do a dual enrollment program. And just briefly, like I said, very briefly, since we are short on time, have there been specific ways where you have seen this be very beneficial to the students in how they end their completion of their degree?

Ms. KAROLEWICS. Absolutely, Congresswoman Aderholt.

Probably 15 years ago, we were able to secure a national Tech-Prep Demonstration Program grant. We also have been the recipient of Dual Enrollment Experimental Pell. But I will speak to the Tech-Prep Demonstration grant.

We built what is called a Fast Track Academy, which is an early college program, where juniors and seniors finish their high school diploma and their associate degree on our campus as full-time students. Their graduation rate is about 20 points higher than our native students. In addition, there are no gaps between ethnic groups or racial groups or male/female or majors or, you know, that sort of thing.

So dual enrollment is a good investment, because not only does it improve their opportunity to graduate on time, but it also puts them in the workforce about 2 years earlier, so that increases their earnings potential substantially.

Mr. ADERHOLT. Thank you.

Ms. KAROLEWICS. You are welcome.

Mr. ADERHOLT. Ranking Member DeLauro, would you like to make any closing comments?

Ms. DELAURO. Thanks so much, Mr. Chair.

Mr. ADERHOLT. Very, very brief.

Ms. DELAURO. Well, I can't guarantee that, but I will get to it quickly.

I would just, too, like my colleagues have mentioned—we have heard extraordinary commentary here this morning, in that I think

we can get a sense of security about the value of community colleges and their value to our future, the success of the participants in the program, but the success of our economy and where our economy is going. And you are leading the way. And with the outcomes that you spoke about, Mr. Cooper, that they may be better than the 4-year colleges and what people are doing.

And the mission that each one of you has to make sure that you are providing every single opportunity for a youngster and for community colleges, which I am going to go into in a second. You know, they are not 18-year-olds or 17-year-olds; it is a different population.

So I want to thank you for your commitment, for the commitment of employers and the community college system to move forward and take the lead on what is happening in our educational system today.

The goal and the mission is, you know, as you so clearly stated, pathways—pathways to employment and to a living wage, to be able to deal with the cost of living, which is the single biggest issue we face in this Nation today. It is about how do people cope. People live paycheck to paycheck, and they are looking about how they are going to survive economically. You build that ladder of opportunity to the middle class. And thank you for that. To vulnerable people, to working people, you make that possible.

You have testified, community colleges that we turn to to work with employers, to develop trusted pathways, as I said, to deliver those outcomes, this is who we are talking about: the Americans who study at community colleges, who are looking for an opportunity. The student is older, an average age of 27. Eight percent are 40 years or older. Fifty-seven percent of students are women. More than 20 percent of the students are parents. Thirteen percent are single parents.

Yesterday, I spoke with a young woman in my office about the importance of community colleges, a veteran that suffered injuries while deployed and going back to school using Pell. These are the people who are affected by the Department of Education. And what she told me was, “Defunding Education”—and this is a quote—“would be an injustice to me and to many others like me.” They are lifelines that the schools and the students count on.

Understand, you don’t have to take my word for it and the word of my colleagues. Listen to the news, as you do. Read the papers. Page 319 of “Project 2025”: “Eliminate the Department of Education.” But that is not only where that goes. That is one piece. The programs of the greatest value to you and the work that you do are really on the chopping block. This is the reality here.

That is why my colleague, Mr. Pocan, said it is a little bit surreal. We are talking about how successful you are and, at the same time, the backdrop is, “Let’s be done with the Federal involvement in these programs.”

No one is suggesting that we determine your curriculum or we determine anything else. The States will do that. We are here to provide resources for the opportunities that you provide.

But House Republicans—this is a fact. Look at the appropriations bills. Don’t take my word for it, of what is being cut. Look at what Presidents Musk and Trump are talking about.

In their 2025 appropriations bill, this is what House Republicans are proposing: \$1.7 billion—these are lifelines—\$1.7 billion cut to the WIOA State grants; \$135 million to registered apprenticeships; \$1 billion cut to campus-based student aid; \$73 billion elimination of grants to support student-parents with childcare to allow them to be able to go to school, to be able to go to work, to be able to succeed.

And with President Musk's unlawful termination of \$1 billion in appropriated Education contracts and grants, the wreckage has only begun. They really are on the precipice of illegally dismantling the United States Department of Education, gutting the Department of Labor workforce programs.

We are the Appropriations Committee. We have been entrusted by the United States Constitution, in Article I, that the Appropriations Committee has the power of the purse. We come together through only one of the only areas in which to keep this government open. Democrats and Republicans, both the House and the Senate, have to come together to agree on the bills, pass them, and then we send it to the President for a signature.

The law of the land. We made decisions about where the money should go, based on a lot of different factors, including things that you are talking about here today. That is what is being dismantled. And as the ranking member on the Appropriations Committee, as a former chair of the Appropriations Committee, I am not going to sit around and let that happen.

The Appropriations Committee is the center of this government. If we don't get it right, this government shuts down. And I don't want to do that. That is the last thing I want to do. I want to get us across the finish line.

If we need to deal with existing programs and look at improving those programs—there have been some suggestions and ideas—let's look at that. Let's gather that data and figure out what works best, you know.

The bipartisan continuing resolution we passed in December originally included the reauthorization of WIOA that would do exactly that. It was the reauthorization of the program. Unfortunately, yeah—and I will continue to label him “President Musk”—tried to blow up that legislation, and the WIOA reauthorization was a senseless casualty of what happened. That is the example going forward.

And I would just say, if we want to take a look at waste and fraud and abuse in these programs, I asked you to take a look at predatory for-profit colleges and for-profit charter schools that waste Federal funds, and the outcomes—the outcomes are lower employment opportunities, lower wages, what you were talking about, Mr. Cooper. Let's look at all of these avenues.

I am a strong supporter of community colleges. I believe in what you do. I believe in the difference that you are making for young people, older people that don't want to go to a 4-year liberal arts college. That is good if you can do it, that is what I did, but, hell, that is not the only way to help people realize their dreams and their aspirations.

You help people realize their dreams and aspirations. And what this body needs to be doing is to assist you in doing that, and not

cutting the rug out from under you and what it is that you try to do for our students today. Thank you.

Help us, is what I am saying. And I think everyone on this panel supports community colleges here. That is what the discussion has been about, and you have made it real here today. Help us, so that we don't cut off your opportunities.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman, for indulging me. Appreciate that.

Mr. ADERHOLT. Thank you.

Well, with that, I want to thank each of our guests today for your comments, your attentiveness to the questions and answers, and we look forward to working with you.

And, with that, we stand adjourned.

[Whereupon, at 12:24 p.m., the subcommittee was adjourned.]

WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 26, 2025.

FEDERAL INVESTMENTS IN ELEMENTARY EDUCATION

WITNESSES

MS. VIRGINIA GENTLES, DIRECTOR, DEFENSE OF FREEDOM INSTITUTE FOR POLICY STUDIES

DR. LINDSEY BURKE, DIRECTOR OF THE CENTER FOR EDUCATION POLICY, THE HERITAGE FOUNDATION

MR. ROBERT KIM, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, EDUCATION LAW CENTER

MS. STARLEE COLEMAN, PRESIDENT AND CEO, NATIONAL ALLIANCE FOR PUBLIC CHARTER SCHOOLS

Mr. ADERHOLT. Well, good morning, everyone. It is good to have everyone here at the Labor, Health, Human Services Subcommittee on Appropriations.

And thank you for our witnesses for being here, especially as we discuss funding for K–12 education.

And this subcommittee is going to be looking at two areas primarily today: number one, the effectiveness of Federal K–12 funding, and also the importance of school choice.

And I look forward to hearing and learning from each of our witnesses about the state of our public K–12 schools, the challenges that our students are facing, and the trends that these experts that are before us are seeing in the field.

America's students are struggling. There is no way to sugarcoat, I think, that fact. The results from the latest National Assessment for Education Progress showed student test scores overall are below the 2019 levels in all grades and subjects.

Students have not recovered from the pandemic, and the lowest achieving students are disproportionately falling farther and farther behind. Matter of fact, one-third of eighth graders nationwide are currently reading below the basic level. The current system has failed these kids by leaving them wholly unprepared for the workforce. If this trend continues, the entire Nation will suffer socially and economically. Other industrialized nations will continue to outpace us.

In too many schools, education in core subjects like reading and math are being replaced by indoctrination. School administrators and teachers are too focused on social justice issues that schools were never meant to address and not focused enough on academic instruction and academic excellence. Unfortunately, schools are often using Federal funds to pursue these misguided, harmful agendas.

As I have said in this room before, probably on several occasions, schools should be teaching kids how to think and not what to think. For the sake of their children, parents across the country are standing up and demanding change from administrators and, in

some cases, looking for nondistrict schooling options for their children.

I am pleased that the Trump administration has taken several steps to champion school choice and eliminate divisive ideologies from K–12 education. I look forward to working with the administration over the next 4 years to make improvements to the overall system.

While we may hear calls from some in this room today for more Federal funding on K–12 schools, the data tells another story. The Federal Government appropriates \$19 billion annually for block grants to States for Title I K–12 schools. During the COVID pandemic, Congress appropriated an additional \$190 billion for K–12 schools. On average, Federal funding comprises less than 10 percent of the State education budgets.

In recent years, total Federal and State per-pupil spending on education has skyrocketed. I think we all have to be clear, taxpayers are spending more and more on education but getting far less results to the students. We need to pause, assess our efforts, and that is exactly what this administration is attempting to do.

We have a big challenge ahead as we turn to look at student success. As it has often been said, the definition of “insanity” is doing the same thing over and over again expecting that you would get different results, while over and over again Congress has opened its credit card and the efforts are not improving the outcomes.

I hope this hearing that we have this morning will help highlight why we cannot simply continue to expect more Federal support to drive better outcomes in K–12 education.

Before I turn to my ranking member, Ms. DeLauro, for her remarks, I would like to introduce the panel.

First, we have Ms. Virginia Gentles from the Defense of Freedom Institute for Policy Studies. Welcome. She will share with us the challenges facing our schools, students, and parents today.

Next, we will hear from Dr. Lindsey Burke, who is director of the Center for Education Policy at the Heritage Foundation, and her focus is on K–12 education reform and school choice. Glad to have you here.

We will also hear from Ms. Starlee Coleman, president and CEO of the National Alliance for Public Charter Schools, about the strong academic outcomes that charter schools are yielding for students despite limited Federal funding.

And last and certainly not least, we will hear from Mr. Robert Kim from the Education Law Center, whose expertise includes civil and education rights law and policy.

So thank you to each of our witnesses for coming here today and sharing with us. We as Members of Congress want to demonstrate the respect and courtesy that you deserve. And this subcommittee will have ample opportunities to engage in vigorous debate over the size and the scope of Federal funding, but these witnesses that we have here today are going to share with us information within their particular areas of expertise. And I look forward to giving them the opportunity to do that.

I would now like to turn to the committee’s ranking member and also serves as the full committee ranking member, Ms. DeLauro, for any comments that she would like to make.

Ms. DELAURO. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. And thank you for holding this hearing on how our investments in elementary education have demonstrably improved outcomes for children and how ending those investments would jeopardize the future success and prosperity for millions of young Americans.

I might add just as a note, Mr. Chairman, that last week, Elon Musk canceled the NAEP survey, National Association for Education Program—National Assessment for Educational Programs. He canceled the NAEP survey—and you referenced NAEP in your remarks—that survey for 17-year-olds. So we apparently are not concerned about student data any longer.

I want to extend my thanks as well with a warm welcome to our witnesses. Ms. Gentles, Dr. Burke, Mr. Kim, Ms. Coleman, welcome to the Labor-HHS. That is Labor, Health, Human Services, and Education Appropriations Subcommittee.

This hearing is on an incredibly important topic, but I must begin by underscoring that these are not normal times and we cannot continue business as usual. In fact, the topic of this hearing ignores the outcries of the American people, because today House Republicans want to discuss investments in education while Elon Musk and President Trump are illegally terminating Department of Education funding.

The American people are calling our offices every day asking about the illegal spending freeze and about what has happened to already appropriated funding, keeping in mind that the power of the purse resides in the Congress and within this Appropriations Committee. It does not reside with the executive or with somebody who has been deputized by the executive to have the power of the purse. Neither one has that power.

Republicans owe the American people real answers about when their disrespect for the law will end and not more pretending that this is business as usual. Furthermore, we are on the cusp of an executive order to dismantle Department of Education.

An unelected, unchecked billionaire has already done untold damage to our Nation's ability to collect, to analyze invaluable information on school performance, including and especially for our youngsters in elementary school.

Earlier this month, Elon Musk's so-called Department of Government Efficiency terminated \$1 billion in Education Department contracts and awards, and that includes dozens of contracts awarded by the Institute of Education Sciences. That is the Department's independent research and statistics panel that tracks school performance nationwide.

Without IES' critical work, parents, educators, and policymakers are in the dark when trying to compare student and schoolwide achievement.

Elon Musk is taking a wrecking ball to the welfare of children in schools and their ability to learn. It is unconscionable. I believe it is immoral and, above all, it is unlawful. And that is only where they began.

President Trump reiterated that his top goal for his Secretary of Education nominee, Linda McMahon, was to, and I quote, "do a great job and put yourself out of a job," end quote.

I refuse to let these hearings distract us from where Republicans want to take public education. The Department of Education is fundamental to the American Dream, and that will be demonstrated by our hearing today.

So let us begin. Today's hearing was called by the majority to re-examine a question that has, in fact, been settled for decades. Does money matter when it comes to elementary and student outcomes? Some of my Republican colleagues claim that additional funding for a public school does not improve outcomes, a claim with no basis in reality and one that is, in fact, at complete odds with ample scientific examples.

A 2018 review of research on the relationship between education spending and student outcomes—this was by Northwestern University, I didn't make this up—found statistically significant positive results for students in 12 out of 13 studies. Similar—do I have the studies here? I have them right here. These are the studies, the studies which debunk this notion that we are trying here to examine today about student outcomes.

Similar studies—Texas, Wisconsin, California, other States—have also found that increases in school funding improve student outcomes. It is common sense. Funding that puts more teachers in classrooms to serve students from low-income backgrounds yields positive results.

So that raises the question, why would anyone advance a baseless claim that has been debunked over and over again? I believe, as the majority's fiscal year 2025 Labor-HHS education bill showed, House Republicans are following the Project 2025 playbook and helping Elon Musk reach Project 2025 stated goals of eliminating the Department of Education, illegally stealing lawfully appropriated Federal education funds, eliminating Title I, which is the cornerstone of our Federal investment in public education and which supports 25 million students nationwide.

Let us look at that widely debunked claim again, specifically as it relates to Title I. In his paper, quote, "Follow the Money: School Spending From Title I to Adult Earnings," end quote, renowned economist Dr. Rucker Johnson found that, and I quote, "increases in Title I funding are significantly related to increases in the likelihood of graduating from high school, reductions in both the likelihoods of grade repetition and school suspension or expulsion, more years of completed education, higher earnings, work hours, a reduction in the annual incidence of poverty in adulthood at ages 30 to 40, and a reduction in the likelihood of ever being incarcerated by age 35. The effects on educational outcomes are more pronounced for children from poor families," end quote.

Of course, these findings and others were only made possible thanks in part to grants, contracts, and studies administered by the Department's Institute of Education Sciences. So let's end the Institute and not have the data.

Perhaps it explains the unlawful and reckless termination of \$1 billion in research grant contracts. When this administration finds facts inconvenient, they simply try to change the facts or silence the source.

What is even more baffling is that the Republican attacks on public education are wildly unpopular. There is no mandate to re-

move teachers from the classroom, but that is where they are taking us.

A recent bipartisan poll commissioned by All4Ed found that 58 percent of voters oppose eliminating the Department of Education, while just 29 percent support such a reckless move. A whopping 68 percent of voters agree that, and I quote, “We should increase funding to improve public schools so that they better meet the needs of students for the jobs and careers of the future,” end quote, with only 24 percent supporting a contrarian view that, quote, “We should increase funding to give parents vouchers so they can send their child to the school that best meets their needs.”

Selling vouchers as school choice—quote, “school choice”—is a misnomer. The real choice in the equation goes to private schools who can choose to reject students that do not come from well-to-do families. And then what happens? Where should those students go? Nine out of ten students in our country attend public school.

I implore my colleagues across the aisle, stand up for the majority of Americans who reject the premise of this hearing, who oppose the actions Elon Musk and Russ Vought are taking to make Project 2025 a reality. Stand up for 50 million children who attend public schools in rural, suburban, and urban school districts across this country.

In the meantime, we need to get our work done. We are nearly 5 months past the end of the fiscal year without a Labor, Health, Human Services, and Education bill that can become law. But the funding cuts in the 2025 Labor-HHS Education bill that has been proposed by the majority would take a wrecking ball to programs that ensure elementary school students ever have a chance at achieving that American Dream.

From K–12 education, the majority put cuts of \$8.6 billion on the table. Where are they seeking to exercise their so-called fiscal responsibility? Nearly half of that cut comes from Title I, which would result in thousands of teachers being kicked out of classrooms.

I do not believe the American people want larger class sizes, fewer teachers among them, but that is exactly what House Republicans aim to deliver.

They have also found savings by eliminating programs that help young children learn English, programs that provide grants to State and local education agencies to help schools meet their State academic standards, and programs that provide grants to help students grapple with ever-mounting stress and pressure.

Disheartened, to say the least, to see my colleagues take aim at the programs that help their own constituents advance their education, programs that improve the livelihoods of children and their families.

And when we sit down to negotiate a full-year funding bill that could reach 218 votes, which the House Republicans’ proposal cannot, I look forward to protecting investments in Title I, ensuring a quality elementary education does not become the purview of only the wealthy.

This committee, this Congress should be focused on finishing full-year appropriations bills. We now stand less than 4 weeks

away from the March 14 deadline without so much as a top-line agreement.

The American people are demanding help with the cost of living, the single biggest issue they are facing, and we can do that here. This committee has incredible power to change lives, to help the middle class. We can help make education affordable to make it easier to succeed in the workforce through our funding bills.

Unfortunately, the pressing need to finish full-year bills is not even the most urgent challenge to our Federal education priorities. The Department of Education, created by an act of Congress, funded by appropriations bills passed by these Congresses, and signed into law—and they are laws, they are not directives, they are laws—ensures that no matter the wealth that their family does or does not have or whether they have a disability or other disadvantage, every single child has the opportunity to obtain an education. It is the embodiment of what Horace Mann called, and I quote, the “great equalizer.” The role of the Department of Education is crucial in securing the opportunities and rights of every student in America.

Instead of shoring up our investments in American students, Elon Musk plans to follow the Project 2025 playbook, turn public education over to the highest bidders, the wealthiest families, and he is doing so with the cooperation and the capitulation of House Republicans.

Families and communities across the country are reeling from multiple crises in classrooms, skyrocketing costs, learning loss, achievement gaps, educator shortages, and epidemics of loneliness and of school violence, and they are looking to our elected officials for solutions.

Government of the people, by the people, for the people cannot be replaced by government of billionaires by billionaires and for billionaires.

If we want to eliminate the Department of Education, I say to my colleagues, then put your name on a bill to do that. Let your constituents see it. Let us debate it. Let us and the American people deliberate. Do not yield our authority and the rule of law to unchecked billionaires.

As we will discuss today, elementary education is an irreplaceable prerequisite to economic mobility in this country, and our Federal investments play an irreplaceable role in ensuring the promise of an education is fulfilled for every child in this country.

What we cannot do and what we will not do is to retreat from our children’s education altogether.

Thank you, and I yield back.

Mr. ADERHOLT. Thank you, Ms. DeLauro.

And now I would like to turn to our witnesses. You have each been allotted up to 5 minutes to deliver your opening remarks. Of course, your written testimony will be included in the full record.

So we will just start and we will just go down the line. So, Ms. Gentles, we will start with you, and you have the floor.

Ms. GENTLES. Chairman Aderholt, Ranking Member DeLauro, and members of the subcommittee, thank you for the opportunity to speak with you today. My name is Virginia Gentles. And as a parent of two school-age children, a product of public schools, and

a former Federal, provincial, and State education bureaucrat, I have had a front row seat to the American education system's challenges and how it harms students.

When I worked for a former subcommittee member in the late 1990s, only 31 percent of fourth grade students and 33 percent of eighth grade students were proficient readers. I wrote talking points for my boss, lamenting alarming test results, and I met with organizations pleading for more funding.

They got their wish, a reliable stream of ever-increasing Federal education funding and steady employment for federally employed and often unionized adults, federally funded and unionized adults.

But where is the evidence that the money truly benefited students? Despite dramatic increases in annual education funding and the \$190 billion in COVID-era supplemental funds, student outcomes are historically low and the achievement gap is widening.

Our country is experiencing an undeclared crisis in education. NAEP scores have declined for over a decade and plummeted after COVID-era school closures. There is no State in the country where the majority of students are performing at grade level in math and reading.

If more money was the solution, why are 94 percent of elementary and middle schoolers living in districts that haven't returned to prepandemic achievement levels?

Despite the vast sums poured into the K-12 system for learning loss recovery, 70 percent of students aren't reading or doing math proficiently, and 40 percent lack basic math and reading skills. These struggling fourth graders don't know the difference between odd and even numbers, and the eighth graders can't find the midpoint between two numbers on a number line. Alarmingly, only 2 percent of black eighth grade students in Milwaukee are proficient in math. These scores are heartbreaking. These students likely will never catch up.

Our education system is robbing children of the future they deserve. Every indicator shows that it is broken. This ongoing systemic disaster reveals that the U.S. Department of Education has failed to fulfill its mission to promote student achievement and preparation for global competitiveness. By imposing onerous regulations and reporting requirements as well as a ceaselessly shifting political agenda, the bloated Department makes it harder for the people closest to students to do their jobs well.

Title I funding began flowing from the Federal Government 60 years ago as part of the 1965 Elementary and Secondary Education Act, so 15 years before the Department of Education was created.

The program's formulas have become increasingly complex, the monitoring requirements have burdened States and districts, and each level of government takes a hefty cut of \$18 or \$19 billion in annual funding, while low-income students continue to struggle.

Ensuring that all students have access to high-quality education is a worthy goal. Pretending that Title I in its current form has met that goal is foolish.

The Federal Government passed the law currently known as the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, IDEA, 50 years ago, so 5 years before the creation of the U.S. Department of Education. The \$14 billion in annual IDEA funding fills a mammoth bureau-

cratic labyrinth that too often harms children with disabilities while forcing students to hire lawyers and sue in order to receive federally promised accommodations and services.

Special interests, like the school unions, exacerbate our Nation's academic crisis. In 1979, the National Education Association pushed for expanded Federal control of education and the creation of the U.S. Department of Education. During the pandemic, the national unions pressured the Federal Government to keep schools closed. And today, State and local unions are closing schools with strikes, blocking tutoring and reading training, and even protecting sexual predators in K-12 schools. Recent coverage of a Michigan union contract revealed that teachers can be drunk on the job four times before a union member can be fired.

So what should be done? We know the answer is not pouring more Federal funding into a fundamentally broken and union-controlled K-12 system. Academic outcomes are worse than when I was a 22-year-old congressional staffer.

Instead, we should empower States and families. State leaders are responding to the academic crisis by improving literacy instruction and expanding education freedom. Tennessee just created a statewide education savings account program that will serve 20,000 students initially, with a priority for low-income students and students with disabilities.

Congress should consider redirecting Federal funding and passing a Federal tax credit that would supplement State-based school choice programs. Additionally, combining Federal education funding streams could reduce ineffective reporting and resource-intensive monitoring requirements, allowing States to allocate taxpayer dollars in a more student-centered way.

Let's stop pretending that the status quo is working. It is time for a new approach that prioritizes the needs of students.

Thank you.

[The information follows:]



**Testimony Before the U.S. House Appropriations Committee, Labor, Health and
Human Services, Education, and Related Agencies Subcommittee
Hearing: "Federal Investments in Elementary Education"
Virginia Gentles
Director, Education Freedom and Parental Rights
Defense of Freedom Institute for Policy Studies (DFI)
February 26, 2025**

Chairman Aderholt and Ranking Member DeLauro, thank you for the opportunity to testify today. As a parent of two school-aged children and a product of traditional public schools, I've had a front-row seat to the challenges within the American education system. I currently serve as the director of the Defense of Freedom Institute's Education Freedom and Parental Rights Initiative and host the *Freedom to Learn* podcast.

In the late 1990s, I was a legislative assistant for a former member of this subcommittee. When I worked here, only 31 percent of fourth-grade students and 33 percent of eighth-grade students were proficient readers according to the [1998 Nation's Report Card](#). I wrote talking points for my boss lamenting the terrible National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) scores and our embarrassing international rankings on the [Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study \(TIMSS\)](#).

As an Appropriations L.A., my days were spent meeting with organizations pleading for more funding. "Just give us more money—we know what is best for students" each association, union, and federal grantee would assure the appropriators and their staff. They got their wish: a reliable stream of ever-increasing federal education funding and steady employment for federally funded adults.

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But where is the evidence that the federal funding benefited students? Federal funding for education has [soared](#) over the last few decades. Annual Title I funding has increased to \$18 billion, including a \$2 billion spike in recent years. The federal government funneled an additional \$190 billion in Covid-era [supplemental federal K-12 education funds](#) to states and school districts through the Title I funding mechanisms. Despite historically high federal education funding, students' academic outcomes are [historically low](#) and the [achievement gap](#) between high- and low-income students persists.

Our country is experiencing an undeclared crisis in education. As we address this important topic of federal education funding today, we must acknowledge that education is a state and local responsibility, and many responsible governors and state leaders are standing up to powerful union leaders and taking clear steps to address the crisis by investing in evidence-based literacy instruction, empowering parents with educational options, and overseeing institutions of higher education. We also must acknowledge the federal government has failed in its mission to help academically vulnerable students. I implore you, as appropriators and legislators, to recognize that the lobbyists' pleas for more funding only serve adults in the K-12 system. Please try something new: Empower states and empower families.

Academic Apocalypse

NAEP scores have been declining for over a decade and, after plummeting from 2019 to 2022, the 2024 scores continue to paint a grim picture. According to the [National](#)



[Assessment Governing Board](#). "National scores are below pre-pandemic levels (2019) in ALL tested grades and subjects." There is no state in the country where the majority of students are performing at grade level in math and reading.

American students' scores have declined on both NAEP and TIMSS since I sat in the chairs behind you over a quarter of a century ago. NAEP scores started dropping about a decade ago and then nosedived from 2019 to 2022. Despite the vast sums poured into the K-12 system by the federal government for learning loss recovery, 2024 NAEP results for eighth graders revealed the lowest reading scores on record for the lowest-performing students and abysmal math scores for struggling students.

Alarming, 70 percent percent of fourth and eighth graders are not proficient readers, meaning they struggle to read grade-level stories and understand informational texts. Sadly, 60 percent of fourth-grade students cannot do math at grade level and only 28 percent of eighth-grade students are proficient at math. NAEP reports often focus on proficiency rates, but let's zoom in on the truly alarming news: 40 percent of fourth-grade students lack *basic* reading skills (see graphic below) and [39 percent](#) of eighth-grade students lack basic math skills. Struggling fourth graders don't know the difference between odd and even numbers and eighth graders can't find the midpoint between two numbers on a number line.



More students scoring below *NAEP Basic*



*Significantly different ($p < .05$) from 2024.

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Education Statistics, National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), Reading Assessment (Grade 4 and 8), 2019 to 2024.

According to *Chalkbeat's* [analysis](#) of the 2024 Nation's Report Card results, "Lower-performing fourth and eighth graders posted the worst reading scores in over 30 years. In eighth grade math, the gap between the highest- and lowest-performing students was the widest in the test's history."

One final NAEP statistic: [2 percent](#) of black eighth-grade students in Milwaukee are proficient in math. 98 percent are not. These scores are heartbreaking.

Additional national and international tests tell a similarly grim story. [Analysis](#) of the NWEA MAP Growth test revealed that eighth graders are a year behind their pre-pandemic counterparts. Based on the historical performance of our public schools, these students will never catch up. The research team behind the [Education Recovery Scorecard](#), led by researchers from Stanford and Harvard universities, [found](#) that



students are continuing to lose ground and the cataclysmic learning loss is widespread. The researchers recently reported that "94 percent of elementary and middle schoolers live in districts that still have not returned to pre-pandemic levels in math and reading."

American students fall below the OECD average on the math portion of the Program for International Student Assessment (PISA). According to the [Hechinger Report](#), "American students scored 13 points lower than in 2018, equivalent to losing two-thirds of a year of education in the subject. These were the lowest U.S. math scores recorded in the history of the PISA math test, which began in 2003." More than one-third of 10th graders are low-performers, meaning they do not know how to "compare distances between two routes or convert prices into a different currency."

The U.S. is not providing students with a quality education and students are not prepared to be productive members of society. Our education system is robbing them of the future they deserve.

Federal Control Failed

The tsunami of alarming assessment results reveals that the U.S. Department of Education has utterly failed to fulfill its [mission](#) to "promote student achievement and preparation for global competitiveness by fostering educational excellence and ensuring equal access." The Department's failure to improve student outcomes was inevitable, as federal intrusion adds complexity and costs to state and local responsibilities. By imposing onerous regulations, burdensome reporting requirements, and a ceaselessly



shifting political agenda, the bloated and wasteful Department makes it harder for the people closest to students to do their jobs well.

The [Department of Education Organization Act](#) that passed in 1979 at the behest of the nation's largest teachers union, the National Education Association (NEA), resulted in the creation of the Department in 1980. Parents and classroom teachers didn't ask for a new federal bureaucracy. But NEA union leaders wanted to centralize and control education policy while increasing their influence over educational institutions.

Title I funding began flowing from the federal government to states and school districts sixty years ago as part of the 1965 Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA). Title I was intended to improve "academic achievement of the disadvantaged," but the program's formulas have become [increasingly complex](#), the monitoring requirements have burdened states and districts, and low-income students continue to struggle academically. Ensuring that all students have access to high-quality education is a worthy goal. Pretending that Title I has met that goal is foolish.

The federal government passed the Education for All Handicapped Children Act, currently known as the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), fifty years ago. The law also predates the creation of the U.S. Department of Education. As a mother of two complex and wonderful daughters who cried in her car after almost every IEP meeting, this topic is personal. There are more than 8 million children with disabilities in the country, and the challenges parents face navigating the bureaucratic and often



litigious IDEA process are infuriating. Academic outcomes for students with disabilities remain distressingly low.

During the emotionally charged and hyperbolic conversations over the future of the U.S. Department of Education, it will be important for legislators to reassure their constituents that federal IDEA provisions will remain in force regardless of the building that houses the federal workers who oversee the law. As IDEA has not been reauthorized since 2004, it is unlikely that Congress will update the law soon. That said, many parents of students with disabilities will tell you that the existence of IDEA and the mammoth bureaucracy that enforces the law has not guaranteed opportunities and outcomes for their child. Fortunately, a growing number of states are expanding education options so that parents can place their children in the education environments that best meet their needs.

Teachers Unions Harm Students

We must acknowledge the pernicious influence of school unions. The NEA pushed for an expanded federal role in education while undermining state and local efforts to improve educational outcomes for students. It is a well-established fact that union leaders insisted that schools remained closed for prolonged periods during the Covid era, and students' academic performance and emotional and social development suffered as a result. State and local unions exacerbated the nation's academic crisis by closing schools with strikes in [numerous states](#), eliminating afterschool tutoring programs in [Ohio](#), opposing science of reading training in [Indiana](#), skipping school in



[California](#) and [Michigan](#), insisting on a shorter school year in [New Mexico](#), and demanding more hiring despite steep enrollment declines in [New York](#). Unions regularly prioritize protecting adults rather than students. The Defense of Freedom Institute's [Catching the Trash report](#) details how unions protect sexual predators in K-12 schools. Recent [coverage](#) of a Michigan union contract revealed that teachers can be drunk on the job four times before a union member can be fired. A union member caught selling drugs can't be fired until the second time.

Solutions

Policymakers must respond to the nation's academic crisis, rather than simply lament the [tsunami](#) of devastating performance results. Rather than pouring more money tied to strings into education, Congress can reshape the environment by trusting states to do what is best for students and educators. The [law](#) that created the Department acknowledged that "parents have the primary responsibility for the education of their children, and States, localities, and private institutions have the primary responsibility for supporting that parental role." The law also stated that "the American people benefit from a diversity of educational settings." States are increasing access to educational options and empowering parents by creating and expanding education freedom programs at an unprecedented pace. Homeschooling is legal in all states, 46 states and Washington, DC have charter school laws, and over thirty states provide K-12 scholarships or education savings account (ESA) programs.



Tennessee passed the Education Freedom Act earlier this year, creating the nation's fourteenth universally eligible school choice program. The program will offer education savings accounts to K-12 students in the state while prioritizing students from lower-income households. Initially, the state will provide 20,000 scholarships worth about \$7,075 each, and this program, like the others before it, will grow over time.

Federal funds can also be used to free students from schools that are failing to meet their academic needs. The President's [Expanding Educational Freedom and Opportunity for Families](#) executive order opens up opportunities to redirect federal funding so that it supplements state-based school-choice programs that allow students to attend schools that will best meet their academic needs.

Additional steps can be taken at the federal level to free up states and districts to direct resources in a student-centered manner. Combining federal education funding streams could reduce onerous and ineffective reporting and monitoring requirements and provide states with flexibility to provide students, rather than bureaucratic systems, with additional funding.

Conclusion

Pouring an ever-increasing amount of federal funding into a fundamentally broken K-12 system has failed. With [struggling students posting their worst NAEP reading scores](#) in three decades, the situation is more dire than when I was a 22-year-old congressional



staffer. Rather than capitulating to union demands, please prioritize students and direct federal education funding to meet their pressing needs.

Mr. ADERHOLT. Thank you.

Ms. Burke.

Ms. BURKE. Thank you.

My name is Lindsey Burke. The views I express in this testimony are my own and should not be construed as any official position of The Heritage Foundation.

Thank you, Chairman Aderholt and Ranking Member DeLauro, for the opportunity to testify today.

Washington has been on an education spending spree for decades. Throughout the 20th century, inflation-adjusted per-pupil spending increased 3.5 percent per year every year. Education spending on a per-pupil basis has more than tripled in real terms since 1965, the year Lyndon Johnson launched his war on poverty, which included unprecedented new Federal spending on education.

Federal, State, and local spending each more than doubled per pupil in real terms since the Department of Education was created in 1980. And on top of general revenue increases over the past half century, public school districts have also been the recipients of an unprecedented influx of taxpayer funds in the wake of COVID-19. Congress allocated \$190 billion across three appropriations, the largest infusion of cash to K-12 education in history. This was two and a half times the Department of Education's annual budget. To paraphrase Ronald Reagan, we don't have a revenue problem, we have a spending problem.

So how is this money spent? Massive increases in spending have largely financed an ongoing staffing surge. Kennesaw State's Ben Scafidi has documented that from 1950 to 2019, while the number of students increased 100 percent in the Nation's schools, the number of teachers increased 243 percent. The number of nonteaching staff increased 709 percent. Teachers make up just 47.5 percent of all school staff today.

Perhaps we would not care about increased spending if it accompanied increased growth in academic outcomes, but it has not. After an exhaustive review of the literature, Stanford economist Eric Hanushek found that there is, quote, "no strong or systematic relationship between school expenditures and student performance." As Hanushek explained in 2019, quote, While there is some small movement up and down over time, the remarkable aspect is that reading and math performance in 2012 looks virtually unchanged from four decades before. Additionally, the gap between the top and bottom decile of students by family income, the 90/10 gap as it is known, remains the same as it was when the war on poverty began, the equivalent of four grade levels' worth of learning.

As Harvard's Paul Peterson explains, quote, "The stability of these gaps over such an extended time period is striking. We do not find a closing of the gap at some point over the time period only to see it reopen up again. It does not narrow during the Carter years or the Reagan years or during the boom years of the 1990s or after the passage of No Child Left Behind or at any other specific point throughout those five decades. The gap is amazingly unwavering," end quote.

So what is a better path forward? In 1998, the seminal Education At a Crossroads report was published after an exhaustive series of

State hearings and examination into the effect of Federal involvement in education. Several key findings came out of that report.

Federal involvement in K-12 education has led to a, quote, "program for every problem" mentality. It has led to shadow State-level Departments of Education with three times as many federally funded employees in State agencies as at the Federal Department of Education, tasked primarily with administering Federal education programs.

The Crossroads report documented how Federal programs and spending had created, quote, "a cottage industry in selling information on program descriptions, application deadlines, and filing instructions for each of the myriad Federal education programs," end quote.

It detailed how millions of man-hours were required every year to complete the Federal paperwork burden created by the Department of Education. And to add insult to injury, it found that as little as 65 cents on every Federal dollar ultimately made its way back to the classroom.

The conclusion of the Education at the Crossroads report was as salient in 1998 as it is now. Quote, "It is time for the burden of proof to shift from the Federal Government. If it cannot be demonstrated that a particular Federal program is more effectively spending funds than States and local communities otherwise would spend them, Congress should return the money to the States and the people without any burdensome strings attached," end quote.

Since the war on poverty began, taxpayers have spent nearly \$3 trillion on K-12 education just at the Federal level alone. Given the state of American education today, more Federal spending has not been the ticket to improving outcomes for students. It is time to chart a different course.

Thank you.

[The information follows:]



CONGRESSIONAL TESTIMONY

More Federal Funding Isn't the Solution for K-12 Schools

Testimony Before Labor HHS Appropriations Subcommittee

United States House of Representatives

February 26, 2025

Lindsey M. Burke, Ph.D
Director, Center for Education Policy
The Heritage Foundation

My name is Lindsey Burke. I am the Director of the Center for Education Policy at The Heritage Foundation. The views I express in this testimony are my own and should not be construed as representing any official position of The Heritage Foundation. Thank you Chairman Aderholt and Ranking Member DeLauro for the opportunity to testify today.

Spending Over Time

Washington has been on an education spending spree for decades. Throughout the twentieth century, inflation-adjusted per-pupil spending increased on average 3.5 percent per year, every year.ⁱ Education spending on a per-pupil basis has more than tripled in real terms since 1965, the year Lyndon Johnson launched his “War on Poverty,” which included unprecedented new federal spending on education.ⁱⁱ Total inflation-adjusted per-pupil spending increased from \$5,053 during the 1963-64 school year – the year before the “War on Poverty” launched – to \$18,614 during the 2020-21 school year. Federal, state, and local spending each more than doubled per-pupil in real terms from the 1979-80 school year – the year the Department of Education was created – to the 2020-21 school year. Since the agency’s establishment in 1979, total K-12 education spending

(federal, state, and local) has increased from \$370 billion to \$954 billion annually. Of that \$954 billion, 46 percent – or \$437 billion – came from state revenue sources, 44 percent – or \$416 billion – came from local sources, and 10 percent – or \$101 billion – came from federal sources.ⁱⁱⁱ

Covid spending. On top of general revenue increases over the past half century, public school districts have also been the recipients of an “unprecedented influx of taxpayer funds” in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic. Congress allocated \$190 billion across three appropriations, the largest infusion of cash to K-12 education in history.^{iv} This was two-and-a-half times the Department of Education’s annual budget. To paraphrase Ronald Reagan, we don’t have a revenue problem, we have a spending problem.

How is it spent? Massive increases in spending have largely financed an ongoing staffing surge. Since 1950, public schools have added personnel at a rate nearly four times the rate of growth in student enrollment. During the 1949-50 academic year, 70 percent of school personnel were classroom teachers. By 2008, that figure had dropped to just 50 percent, meaning the teacher to non-teacher ratio was down to 1:1.^v Teachers make up just 47.5 percent of school staff today.^{vi} As Kennesaw State’s Ben Scaifidi has documented, the increase in new teacher hires was nearly two and a half times the increase in students, but incredibly, the number of non-teachers (that is, administrative and other staff) increased more than seven times that of student enrollment. From 1950 to 2019, while the number of students increased 100 percent, the number of teachers increased 243 percent and the number of administrators and all other staff increased 709 percent.^{vii}

Spending and achievement. Perhaps we would not care about increased spending if it accompanied increased growth in academic outcomes. But it has not. In 1989, Stanford economist Eric Hanushek reviewed 187 studies examining the relationship between education spending and academic outcomes. He found that there is “no strong or systematic relationship between school expenditures and student performance.”^{viii} As Hanushek explained in 2019, “While there is some

small movement up and down over time, the remarkable aspect is that reading and math performance in 2012 looks virtually unchanged from four decades before. Over this time, it is true that the performance of nine-year-olds and of 13-year-olds has improved, but improvements at earlier ages simply have not carried through to the time when students leave school for college and work.”^{ix}

Additionally, the gap between the top and bottom decile of students by family income (the 90-10 gap) remains the same as it was when the War on Poverty began – the equivalent of four grade levels’ worth of learning. As Harvard’s Paul Peterson explains:

“The stability of these gaps over such an extended time period is striking. We do not find a closing of the gap at some point over the time period only to see it open up again. It does not narrow during the Carter years, or the Reagan years, or during the boom years of the 1990s, or after the passage of No Child Left Behind, or at any other specific point throughout the five decades... The gap is amazingly unwavering.”^x

The outcomes of the most recent National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) were heartbreaking. For example, reading outcomes for 4th and 8th graders fell an average of two points, declining further from what had already been historic lows in 2022. Reading scores declined in 48 out of 50 states. Reading scores are down eight points since 2015. To put that into perspective, 10 points is the equivalent of a year’s worth of learning, meaning students are behind nearly an entire grade level from where they were a decade ago. Disadvantaged students – the exact children decades of federal largesse was designed to help – have fared the worst.

What’s A Better Path Forward?

In 1998, the seminal *Education at a Crossroads* report was published after an exhaustive series of state hearings and examination into the effect of federal involvement in education. Led by then Congressmen and Chairman of the Commission William Goodling along with Congressman

Pete Hoekstra, several key findings came out of that report. Federal involvement in K-12 education had led to a “program for every problem” mentality. It had led to “shadow” state-level departments of education, with three times as many federally funded employees in state agencies as in the federal Department of Education, tasked with administering federal education programs. The *Crossroads* report documented how federal programs and spending had created a “cottage industry in selling information on program descriptions, application deadlines and filing instructions for each of the myriad federal education programs.” It detailed how millions of manhours were required every year to complete the federal paperwork burden created by the Department of Education. And to add insult to injury, it found that as little as 65 cents on the dollar ultimately made it back to the classroom. The conclusion of the Education and Workforce subcommittee was clear in 1998 and even more salient today. The report concludes:

“It is time for America to take a careful look at what billions of federal education dollars have purchased, and to make hard decisions about whether to continue expanding the federal role, or to return control to parents and teachers... “It is time for the burden of proof to shift to the federal government. If it cannot be demonstrated that a particular federal program is more effectively spending funds than state and local communities would otherwise spend them, Congress should return the money to the states and the people, without any burdensome strings attached.”^{xi}

Since the War on Poverty began, taxpayers have spent nearly \$3 trillion on K-12 education just at the federal level alone. Given the state of American education today, more federal spending has not been the ticket to improving outcomes for students. It is time to chart a different course.

1. Congress should stop the education spending spree. Cut waste at the Department by cutting spending for most competitive grant programs.

2. Congress should pass a Department of Education Reorganization Act to remove cabinet-level agency status from the Department, eliminate ineffective and duplicative programs, and send remaining programs to other agencies. For example, funding under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act and Title I should move to HHS, data collection to the Census Bureau, and Indian Education programs to the Bureau of Indian Affairs, and so on.
3. Rather than vertical faux accountability to Washington, Congress can create meaningful horizontal accountability to parents by establishing school choice through mechanisms like Title I portability, expansions of 529 savings accounts to homeschooling families, and education savings accounts for active-duty military families.

The onus is now on defenders of the U.S. Department of Education to make the case for its continued existence. In order to restore academic excellence in America, we must restore education to states, localities, and ultimately, parents.

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Members of The Heritage Foundation staff testify as individuals discussing their own independent research. The views expressed are their own and do not reflect an institutional position of The Heritage Foundation or its board of trustees.

ⁱ Eric Hanushek and Steven Rivkin. (1997). [Understanding the Twentieth-Century Growth in U.S. School Spending](#). *Journal of Human Resources*, 32, (1), 35-68. (Over the 100-year period from 1890 to 1990).

ⁱⁱ U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Statistics of State School Systems, 1969-70; Revenues and Expenditures for Public Elementary and Secondary Education, 1979-80; and Common Core of Data (CCD), "National Public Education Financial Survey," 1989-90 through 2020-21. (This table was prepared September 2023.) https://nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/d23/tables/dt23_236.70.asp?current=yes

ⁱⁱⁱ National Center for Education Statistics. (2024). Public School Revenue Sources. *Condition of Education*. U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences. Retrieved [date], from <https://nces.ed.gov/programs/coe/indicator/cma>.

^{iv} Madison Marino Doan and Benjamin Scafidi, Congress Need Not Panic: Debunking Fears of a "Fiscal Cliff" as School Districts Face ESSER Spending Deadline, *The Heritage Foundation*, Issue Brief, No. 5364, December 19, 2024, at <https://www.heritage.org/education/report/congress-need-not-panic-debunking-fears-fiscal-cliff-school-districts-face-esser>

^v U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Statistics of State School Systems, various years; Statistics of Public Elementary and Secondary Schools, various years; and Common Core of Data (CCD), "State Nonfiscal Survey of Public Elementary/Secondary Education," 1986-87 through 2009-10. (This table was prepared February 2012.) https://nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/d11/tables/dt11_085.asp

^{vi} U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Common Core of Data (CCD), "State Nonfiscal Survey of Public Elementary/Secondary Education," 2012-13 through 2022-23. (This table was prepared January 2024.) https://nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/d23/tables/dt23_213.40.asp

^{vii} Benjamin Scafidi, Back to the Staffing Surge, *EdChoice*, May 2017, at <https://www.edchoice.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/05/Back-to-the-Staffing-Surge-by-Ben-Scafidi.pdf>

^{viii} Eric A. Hanushek (1989). The Impact of Differential Expenditures on School Performance, *Educational Researcher* 18(4).

^{ix} Eric Hanushek, The Fall of Educational Productivity and Policy Paralysis (2019). In *The Not-So-Great Society*, Lindsey M. Burke and Jonathan Butcher (Eds.). *The Heritage Foundation*.

^x Paul E. Peterson, Student Achievement Gap Fails to Close for Nearly 50 Years – It Is Time to Focus on Teacher Quality (2019). In *The Not-So-Great Society*, Lindsey M. Burke and Jonathan Butcher (Eds.). *The Heritage Foundation*.

^{xi} Education at a Crossroads: What Works and What's Wasted in Education Today. Subcommittee Report. Subcommittee on Oversight and Investigations of the Committee on Education and the Workforce, U.S. House of Representatives, One Hundred Fifth Congress, Second Session, July 17, 1998.

Mr. ADERHOLT. Thank you.

Mr. Kim.

Mr. KIM. Chairman Aderholt, Ranking Member DeLauro, and distinguished subcommittee members, thank you for the opportunity to testify today. My name is Robert Kim. I serve as the executive director of Education Law Center, a nonprofit organization whose mission is to support and advance public education and the rights of students nationwide. I also served during the Obama administration as deputy assistant secretary in the U.S. Department of Education's Office for Civil Rights.

I would like to begin my remarks by underscoring the stakes of today's conversation on Federal education funding. Millions of American families and thousands of school districts in every State rely on these funds every day to receive or provide critical education services.

I would like to touch on three points regarding Federal investments in our Nation's public schools. One, money matters in education; two, the Federal role in education is critical; and three, a vibrant public education system is vital to our Nation's prosperity and global standing.

On the first point, researchers overwhelmingly agree that increased funding boosts student achievement and other life outcomes. Even Dr. Hanushek, a leading expert associated with the "money doesn't matter" camp, concluded recently that there was a positive and statistically significant relationship between education spending and not only improved test scores but improved high school completion and increased college attendance.

In addition, studies show that adequate school funding leads to other gains for students, such as increased adult wages and life expectancy and decreased contact with the criminal justice system. In short, sufficient funding really does make a difference in education.

Second, the Federal role in education is vitally important to reduce inequality and bridge opportunity and achievement gaps among students. States and districts rely on Federal funding to varying degrees, but in every case the Federal contribution is significant.

For example, the 17 members of this subcommittee alone represent 1.3 million public schoolchildren attending schools within your congressional districts that receive \$3 billion annually in Federal revenue, according to the latest available data. Drops in such funds would be devastating to your constituents, and the same goes for every Member of Congress.

At the Department, I experienced firsthand how the Federal Government works to expand and ensure equal educational opportunity for the most vulnerable students. Key Federal programs and initiatives include supporting schools serving high percentages of low-income students, rural education, parent and family engagement, school safety, literacy development, effective instruction, grants for teachers and school leaders, arts education, gifted and talented education, expanding prekindergarten access, career and technical education, supporting charter and magnet schools as well as Promise Neighborhood and full-service community schools; and addressing the needs of our most vulnerable students, students living in poverty, homeless and migrant students, Indian, Native Ha-

waiian, and Alaska Native students, students with disabilities and multilingual learners and so on.

Also, I cannot overstate the importance of two additional functions of the Department: research, evaluation, and data collection and civil rights enforcement. Cuts in education research staffing and contracts limit our ability to monitor educational progress, identify and evaluate the effectiveness of education strategies and programs, and ensure sound use of taxpayer dollars.

And freezes or cutbacks in OCR staffing and civil rights enforcement have impacted already thousands of parents trying to secure services for their children or to protect them from harassment or discrimination at school. We must not let the dismantling of critical Department functions continue.

Finally, it is so important that we preserve and enhance public education in America. Proposals to shift Federal education funding streams for public schools to private school vouchers, including through ESA accounts and other mechanisms, are dangerous for multiple reasons.

The negative fiscal effects of vouchers alone are huge and have accelerated at an alarming pace over the past 3 years. We see the effects of this already in States like Florida and Arizona, where hundreds of millions or even billions of dollars are being spent on vouchers while public schools in those States are among the lowest funded in the country. These trends stretch State budgets to the max and threaten their ability to maintain high-quality public schools that are free and open to all students.

So in conclusion, I urge every member of this committee to support a strong Federal role in and funding for public education, which is so critical to our Nation's prosperity and to our democracy.

Thank you very much.

[The information follows:]

House Appropriations Subcommittee Hearing:
Federal Investments in Elementary Education
February 26, 2025
10:30 am, Rayburn House Office Building, Room 2358C

Testimony of Robert Kim, Esq., Executive Director, Education Law Center

My name is Robert Kim. I serve as Executive Director of Education Law Center (ELC), a nonprofit organization whose mission is to support and advance public education and the rights of students nationwide. ELC supports school finance litigation and advocacy in multiple states and disseminates an annual research report on K-12 public-school funding in all 50 states.¹

I begin by emphasizing the importance of federal funding to U.S. public schools and the millions of students who attend them. While more federal funding is not, by itself, a magic solution for the challenges we face in public education, depriving public schools of critical federal funding would have immediate and long-term negative consequences for millions of students and communities across the country.

Over the last decade, the federal government has provided a relatively small share of funding for public schools,² but what it *does* provide is crucial, especially for schools, districts, and states with large numbers of students living in poverty, students with disabilities, and other underserved students. Accordingly, I raise four essential considerations related to the federal government and school funding: (1) indisputable evidence that increased school funding contributes to positive outcomes; (2) the importance of *federal* funding to states and districts that struggle to provide adequate funding on their own; (3) the dangers of radically changing how federal education funds are distributed; and (4) the importance of preserving the U.S.

¹ Education Law Center (2024). *Making the Grade: How Fair is School Funding in Your State?*

² The federal education funding contribution to each state can be found at the University of Michigan's Federal Education Funding Data Dashboard: <https://poverty.umich.edu/federal-education-funding-data-dashboard/>.

Department of Education.

I. Quality research consistently demonstrates that increasing school funding leads to improved student achievement and other positive outcomes.

Recent studies using rigorous methods show that higher spending improves student achievement.³ For example, a study of school finance reform in California found that a \$1,000 per-pupil increase for three consecutive years led to a full grade-level of improvement in math and reading achievement across all grades.⁴ A study in Texas found that a 10% increase in spending led to improved reading and math scores, reduced dropout rates, and improved graduation rates. These gains accrued in later grades with greater exposure to funding increases and were largely concentrated in poorer districts.⁵

Research also shows that spending *cuts* have resulted in lower test scores, lower college attendance rates, and larger achievement gaps by poverty level and race.⁶ A study of state funding reductions in Kansas between 2010 and 2018 showed that funding cuts had more severe negative effects on achievement in rural districts.⁷

Studies asserting that additional school funding does not lead to improved outcomes, or that point to lagging national or international test scores as evidence that money does not matter, omit important context.⁸ In addition, they fail to account for the fact that students in well-funded

³ See, e.g., Jackson, C.K. (2020). *Does school spending matter? The new literature on an old question. An equal start: Policy and practice to promote equality of opportunity for children*. American Psychological Association. https://works.bepress.com/c_kirabo_jackson/38/.

⁴ Johnson, R. (2023). *School funding effectiveness: Evidence from California's local control funding formula*. Learning Policy Institute. https://doi.org/10.54300/529_194

⁵ Kreisman, Daniel and Matthew P. Steinberg. (2019). *The effect of increased funding on student achievement: Evidence from Texas's small district adjustment*. *Journal of Public Economics*, 176, 118-141. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jpubeco.2019.04.003>

⁶ Jackson, C.K., Wigger, C., & Xiong, H. (2021). *Do school spending cuts matter? Evidence from the Great Recession*. *American Economic Journal: Economic Policy*, 13 (2), 304-35. <https://www.aeaweb.org/articles?id=10.1257/pol.20180674>

⁷ Rauscher, E. (2020). *Does Money Matter More in the Country? Education Funding Reductions and Achievement in Kansas, 2010–2018*. *AERA Open*, 6(4), 1-38.

⁸ These studies did not account for new accountability goals and requirements that expanded the population served by public schools. For example, increased funding for students with severe disabilities is not intended to improve test scores. Likewise, declining dropout rates have led to higher enrollments in the older grades, though these students may depress test scores. See Education Law Center (2023). *Money Matters: Evidence Supporting Greater Investment in PK-12 Public Education*. <https://edlawcenter.org/assets/files/pdfs/School%20Funding/Money%20Matters%20Talking%20Points.pdf>.

school districts and states in the U.S. do comparatively well on national and international achievement tests.⁹ In fact, increased funding is linked to improved high school graduation rates, reduced student suspension and expulsion rates, and improved student outcomes in adulthood, including higher wages and reduced poverty.¹⁰

While money matters, how money is spent is also important. The U.S. Department of Education seeks to direct its spending to the most essential programs and initiatives through multiple, targeted funding streams. In addition, federal funding is spent on data collection and research that helps educators at the state and local level identify best practices so they can better ensure taxpayer dollars are being used efficiently and effectively.

II. Federal funding is critical to support states, school districts, and the most vulnerable students and families.

U.S. schools rely on property taxes for their funding, which puts students growing up in communities with less property wealth at a disadvantage. Importantly, federal dollars help balance these disparities.

First, federal K-12 education funding plays an essential role by allocating resources to districts serving high-need students. Specifically, the U.S. Department of Education distributes targeted funds for low-income and neglected or at-risk students (Title I); English learners (Title III); rural populations (Title V); American Indians, Native Hawaiians, and Alaska Natives (Title VI); students residing on Indian lands, military bases, low-rent housing properties, or other federal properties (Title VII); homeless students (Title IX); and students with disabilities

⁹ Carnoy, M. Garcia, E., & Khavenson, T. (2015). *Bringing it back home*. Economic Policy Institute. <https://www.epi.org/publication/bringing-it-back-home-why-state-comparisons-are-more-useful-than-international-comparisons-for-improving-u-s-education-policy>

¹⁰ Jackson, C.K., Johnson, R.C., Persico, C. (2015). *The effects of school spending on education and economic outcomes: Evidence from school finance reforms*. National Bureau of Economic Research. https://www.nber.org/system/files/working_papers/w20847/w20847.pdf

(IDEA). It is not a stretch to say that cutting federal funds would negatively impact hundreds of thousands of students and families in every school district in the United States.¹¹

In addition, federal funding helps provide educational opportunity for students, especially the most vulnerable, in states with less property wealth to provide for education.¹² Viewed as a whole, the current federal K-12 funding scheme reflects an overarching goal to ensure equal educational opportunity, consistent with multiple federal statutes.¹³ Additionally, public opinion polling has shown that Americans of all political parties support greater federal investment in key areas, including workforce preparation, teacher recruitment and retention, student mental health, and helping students who've fallen behind.¹⁴

III. Changing federal funding programs to block grants or private school voucher programs would worsen educational outcomes for millions of students.

Currently, federal education funds are distributed to states and districts via formula and competitive grants. Major K-12 programs, such as Title I and IDEA, are distributed using various mathematical formulas designed to ensure funds are directed to students and communities where the need is greatest. The Trump Administration has signaled its intent to convert large percentages of formula funds to block grants that shift funding to states, or to private school voucher programs that shift public funds to private education costs. Block grants are not as

¹¹ Winner, J. (2025, Feb. 13). *What the assault on public education means for kids with disabilities*. The New Yorker. <https://www.newyorker.com/news/the-lede/what-the-assault-on-public-education-means-for-kids-with-disabilities>; Floyd, K., Granville, P., Hinds, C., & Potter, H. (2025, Feb. 12). *How gutting the U.S. Department of Education Would Hurt Students and Their Families*. The Century Foundation. <https://tcf.org/content/commentary/how-gutting-the-u-s-department-of-education-would-hurt-students-and-their-families>.

¹² See data from the Urban Institute. *School funding: Do poor kids get their fair share?* <https://apps.urban.org/features/school-funding-do-poor-kids-get-fair-share/>.

¹³ These include the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965, the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), the Equal Educational Opportunities Act of 1974 (EEOA), the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act, the Civil Rights Act of 1964, Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972, Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, and the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990.

¹⁴ PDK International. (2024). *The 56th annual PDK Poll: Federal focus on education initiatives wins broad public support*. <https://pdkpoll.org/2024-poll-results/>.

effective as grants that direct funds for certain populations of students or that are directed toward specific purposes. If a larger percentage of federal funds are distributed through block grants, Congress will lose its ability to ensure that federal funds are going to students facing the steepest barriers, or that schools are meeting minimum standards for student achievement and success.

Converting federal formula funds to voucher programs would be even more problematic, as it would transfer billions of dollars from public education to the private sector. The private schools that benefit from such programs do not have the same level of accountability as public schools for using taxpayer funds effectively, do not have to comply with federal and state laws requiring public schools to be nondiscriminatory and open to all, and do not improve (and in fact worsen) student outcomes.¹⁵ And research shows that the total public costs of education borne by taxpayers would increase by up to 33%, or \$203 billion, per year with universal vouchers.¹⁶ In addition, recent polls indicate that over two-thirds of voters, regardless of party, would choose to use federal funding on public schools over voucher programs.¹⁷

IV. The U.S. Department of Education plays a critical role supporting states, school districts and students and ensuring federal funds are spent wisely and efficiently.

Finally, I cannot overstate the vital importance of the role of the U.S. Department of Education to support states and districts in their efforts to provide high-quality education.¹⁸ The Department not only provides key funding for early childhood education, K-12 education, career

¹⁵ Lubienski, C. & Malin, J. *The New Terrain of the School Voucher Wars*. The Hill (Aug. 30, 2019); Prothero, A. & Harwin, A. *Private School Choice Programs Fall Short on Transparency, Accountability*. (Feb. 28, 2020) Education Week; Black, D. *Voucher Expansion and the Threat to Students' Educational and Civil Rights. The School Voucher Illusion*. Teachers College Press (2020); Abdulkadiroglu, A., Pathak, P. & Walters, C. (2018). *Free to Choose: Can School Choice Reduce Student Achievement?* American Economic Journal: Applied Economics 10 (1): 175–206.

¹⁶ Shand, R. & Levin, H.M. (2001). *Estimating a price tag for school vouchers*. National Education Policy Center.

¹⁷ All4Ed. (2024). *OpinionatED: Voters' views on education in 2024*. <https://all4ed.org/publication/executive-summary-opinionated-voters-views-on-education-in-2024/>.

¹⁸ The Department was created in 1979 by the Department of Education Organization Act; see 20 U.S.C. §3401 *et seq.* Prior to the establishment of the Department, education functions were scattered throughout multiple agencies, and Congress found that there was fragmentation, duplication, inconsistency, and lack of coordination and accountability in education programs and determined that a single Department was necessary.

and technical and adult education, and postsecondary education, it also provides guidance and technical assistance to state and local governments. The Department conducts and supports evaluation, research, and data collection on education trends, conditions, and needs. It ensures accountability in the use of federal funds. It provides funds and assistance for hundreds of thousands of students who rely on federal loans and grants for higher education. It disburses funding in times of emergency. And, critically, it enforces federal civil rights laws to ensure equal educational opportunity in American public schools. These functions are important to the states, to the 14,000 school districts and 5,000 institutions of higher education within the states, and to millions of students and families across the nation.

Thank you for your consideration of this testimony. I look forward to further dialogue with you on February 26.

Mr. ADERHOLT. Thank you.

Ms. Coleman.

Ms. COLEMAN. Chairman Aderholt, Ranking Member DeLauro, and members of the subcommittee, thank you for the invitation to be here today. I am Starlee Coleman, the president and CEO of the National Alliance for Public Charter Schools.

Across the country, more than 8,000 public charter schools serve a diverse student body of 3.7 million students. Forty-six States have passed legislation allowing charter schools to open, and over the last 5 years, public charter enrollment has grown 12 percent.

And charter schools are delivering results. In 2024, the Fordham Institute and the Progressive Policy Institute both found that when charter schools open, students in traditional public schools also thrive. Their research shows that students in both the charter and traditional public schools perform better in reading and math in communities where charter schools exist. This is true in both urban and rural communities.

There is currently one program in the entire Federal budget dedicated to advancing school choice across the country, and that is the Federal Charter Schools Program. The modest Federal investment in this program provides startup funds for new charter schools until State funding kicks in when students arrive on campus. And while the CSP doesn't come close to covering all charter school startup costs, it is a catalyst for advancing one of the most successful bipartisan and in-demand education reforms in American public education history.

While charter schools have become part of the fabric of urban education, it is important for you to know that suburban and rural charter growth is surging. The CSP is vital to our ability to meet parent demand for public school options in these communities.

A CSP grant in Idaho is seeding the growth of charter schools founded and run by retired military leaders, including an Air Force colonel, an Army major and lieutenant colonel, and a Marine Corps major. In Texas, several classical curriculum charter schools have enrollment wait lists numbering in the thousands, including my own child, and a CSP grant is helping those schools open more campuses. In Alabama, the CSP provided startup funds for the Alabama Aerospace and Aviation High School in Bessemer.

The CSP is the way for you to show parents in all States and communities, red and blue, urban and not, that you are listening and investing Federal funds in programs they want and that work. At the same time, we must be honest about what Federal funds alone cannot do, and that is overcome bad policy or practices at the State and local level.

Public schools—district and charter—are coming off historic budget highs, and no reasonable person can look at the most recent NAEP results and say that all we need is more money. More money alone will not improve student outcomes. If schools are using unsound instructional practices, money won't help, but making a change to move to sound practices takes money.

Federal funding can be a powerful incentive to reform State and local policies so they result in better outcomes for children and keep our best teachers in the classroom. And yet, you must strike a careful balance of not micromanaging States and schools. This

may seem like a contradiction, demand results but don't micro-manage. Funding alone won't solve our problems, but we can't fix them without it. This is nuanced work that doesn't lend itself well to sound bites, but it is the needle this committee must thread.

Here are three guiding principles that might help as you think about future K-12 funding. Number one, use Federal funding to support students most in need; two, use Federal funding to expand proven and promising strategies that are increasing student learning; three, use Federal funding to show parents that you are listening to their demand for public school options.

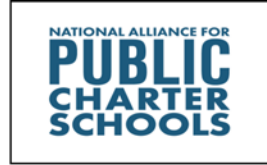
As a mom of a public school student, I want to acknowledge that you have a hard job. It is hard to know how your decisions will trickle down to my little girl's classroom in Austin, Texas, but they do. And moms like me are counting on you to thoughtfully balance the need for resources with the need for sound policy and the need for the decisions, as many of the decisions as possible to be made as close to the children who are being served.

Thank you for the opportunity to be here today.

[The information follows:]

Testimony of Starlee Coleman

President & CEO,
National Alliance for Public Charter Schools
February 26, 2025



Chairman Aderholt, Ranking Member DeLauro and

Members of the Subcommittee, thank you for the invitation to be here today to discuss federal funding for America's schools. I am Starlee Coleman the President & CEO of the National Alliance for Public Charter Schools. We lead a diverse coalition of organizations, schools, teachers, and families in advocating at the federal and state levels for policies that treat public charter schools, their teachers and staff, and families fairly and protect the right of families to choose the public schools that best meet their children's needs.

Across the nation more than 8,150 public charter schools serve a diverse student body of 3.7 million students—8 percent of America's public-school students. Forty-six states have passed legislation allowing charter schools to open. Over the last five years, public charter enrollment has grown 12 percent, while district student enrollment has declined. More than 60 percent of charter school students are eligible for free and reduced-price lunch, and more than 70 percent are students of color—both higher percentages than in district schools.

And charter schools are delivering results. In 2024, the Fordham Institute and the Progressive Policy Institute both found that when charter schools open, students in traditional public schools also thrive. Their research shows that students in both charter

and traditional public schools perform better in reading and math in communities where charter schools exist. This is true for both urban and rural communities.

Today's hearing is about the role and impact of federal funding in K-12 education. Federal funding can be a powerful tool to advance good policy. But funding alone cannot overcome bad policy.

There is currently one program in the entire federal budget dedicated to advancing school choice across the country and that is the federal Charter School Program. The modest federal investment - \$440 million a year; less than 1% percent of federal education spending – in this program provides start-up funds for new charter schools until state funding kicks in when students arrive on campus. The CSP also provides funding to help charter schools pay for school buildings because in most states, state and local funding for buildings is not available to charters. Nearly half of the charter schools educating students today have received CSP funds. And while the CSP doesn't come close to covering all charter school start up or facilities costs or needs, it is a catalyst for advancing one of the most successful, bipartisan, and in-demand education reforms in American public education history.

While charter schools have become part of the fabric of American urban education, it's important for you to know that suburban and rural charter growth is surging. The CSP is vital to our ability to meet parent demand for public school options in these communities, too. A CSP grant in Idaho is seeding the growth of charter schools founded and run by retired military leaders that include an Air Force Colonel, an Army Major, a Marine Corp

Major, and an Army Lieutenant Colonel. In Texas, several classical model charter schools have enrollment waitlists numbering in the thousands and a CSP grant is helping those schools open more campuses. In Alabama, the CSP provided start-up funds for the Alabama Aerospace and Aviation High School in Bessemer.

The CSP is the way for you to show parents in all states and communities - red and blue, urban and not - that you are listening and are investing federal funds in programs **they want** and **that work**.

At the same time, we must be honest about what federal funds alone cannot do -- and that is overcome bad policy or practices at the state and local level.

Public schools – district and charter – are coming off historic budget highs and no reasonable person can look at the most recent results on the Nation's Report Card and draw the conclusion that all we need is more money.

More money alone will not improve student outcomes. If schools are using unsound instructional practices, money won't help. And, making changes to move to sound practices takes money. It takes money to provide new professional development to teachers in the science of reading. It takes money to buy new curriculum and instructional materials. It takes money to provide small group, high dosage tutoring to students who are behind and need to catch up.

More money alone will not keep teachers in the classroom. If state and local policies invite chaos in the classroom, make teachers spend more time on paperwork than instruction, and micromanage every decision they make, money won't help. But it does

take funding to implement outcomes-based teacher bonus programs. It takes funding to deploy tech tools that will streamline administrative work for teachers and school leaders. It takes funding to train teachers and administrators in student engagement practices that work.

Federal funding can be a powerful incentive to reform state and local policies so they result in better outcomes for children and keep our best teachers in the classroom. Many previous bipartisan legislative efforts demonstrate that using federal funding as a carrot for states and districts to implement thoughtful, student-focused policies can have an impact on student achievement. Indeed, the NAEP high water mark was 2017, which came after 15 years of consistent, but reasonable, federal pressure to improve student outcomes under both Republican and Democratic leadership.

And yet, you must strike a careful balance of not micromanaging states and schools. I acknowledge this may seem like a contradiction. Demand outcomes; but don't micromanage. Funding alone won't solve our problems; but we can't fix them without it. This is nuanced work that doesn't lend itself well to soundbites – but it's the needle you must thread.

Here are three guiding principles that might help as you think about future K-12 funding:

1. **Use federal funding to help support students most in need.** Students from low-income families and students with disabilities come into our schools with challenges that take time and resources to address. Ensuring that these students –

especially in low-wealth states – have the resources they need to catch up with their more affluent peers is an appropriate role for federal funding.

2. **Use federal funding to expand proven and promising strategies to increase student learning.** There is a role for the federal government in K-12 education, but it's not to write a blank check. Federal funds can be used to lift up state and local proven and promising practices that are accelerating student learning and help support their replication.
3. **Use federal funding to show parents you are listening to their demand for school options.** The days when parents were ok with whatever school the government assigned them based on where they live are over. Parents in low-income, urban communities with failing district schools are demanding options. Parents in affluent suburban communities with perfectly fine district schools are demanding options. Parents in rural communities where they haven't had a lot of options are demanding them now. The federal government can respond to parents by continuing to use its modest investment in the Charter School Program to ensure families in all states have access to school choices.

As a mom of a public-school student, I want to acknowledge that you have a tough job. It's hard to know how your decisions will trickle down to my little girl's elementary school in Austin, Texas. But they do. Moms like me are counting on you to thoughtfully balance the need for resources with the need for effective policies, and the need for as much of the decision-making as possible to stay close to the children being served.

Thank you for the opportunity to be here today.

Mr. ADERHOLT. Thank you.

All right. Well, we will go ahead and start with our questioning part of the hearing. And, of course, as always, each member will have 5 minutes and—to allot up to 5 minutes to ask any questions.

And, of course, I try not to be too strict on that, because sometimes you are in the middle of a question or an answer, but certainly we want to be respectful to other members on the subcommittee, and so we want to acknowledge that.

So let me start. I will begin with myself.

Ms. Gentles, our students and parents have been through a lot over the last 5 years, especially during the pandemic years. And the latest NAEP scores paint a dismal picture. As you mentioned, in addition to your impressive career in education policy and your work on the Hill, you are also the mother of two school-age children.

Can you highlight or maybe talk about some of the particular challenges that students and teachers and families are experiencing in K–12 education? And, number two, what are some specific areas where you believe that schools have moved beyond what their core mission was to do? So, please.

Ms. GENTLES. Yeah, happy to speak to this issue. My children have attended both private and public school. They were enrolled in our local school districts when the school district closed schools in March 2020; and I ended up pulling them out of the district when the district refused to open in the next school year, 2021 school year.

So a huge problem that I think that we have alluded to here today is the fallout from those school closures, not the fallout from the pandemic. A germ, a disease did not cause historic academic failure. The way that the education system, the K–12 system handled it caused that.

So I would say we will face the fallout from the school closures, from the disruptive quarantines, and from the general policy afterwards to abandon homework, to lower standards, to just do anything that they could to even try to get students back, because we are facing double the rate of chronic absenteeism now in this post-pandemic era. So a whole generation is going to be dealing with that.

I did want to go back to what I said about IDEA. We cannot pretend that it is working as is. And so when we are talking about the 8 million students, 15 percent, I believe, of our Nation's students receiving services or supposed to be receiving services and accommodations under IDEA, we have to acknowledge that that is broken and that we don't have enough special education teachers. So special education teachers should be compensated well and treated well. We need them in the system.

Another thing that we need to address is our literacy crisis. The scores are horrific, 40 percent of students below basic while only 30 percent are proficient. That is a new reality. And I was thankful that I did have the opportunity to pull my child—well, I taught my children to read using the Teach Your Child to Read in 100 Easy Lessons book, which I recommend to all parents. Parents need to be in the driver's seat, take responsibility for that. But I also am

thankful that they are in private schools where literacy is emphasized.

So we need to address how teachers are taught. When it comes to literacy instruction, what are the ed schools doing and what does that look like in the classroom?

And then you mentioned schools getting off track. That was another thing that we have seen trendwise. And, fortunately, my children are protected from that because they are in faith-based private schools at this point. But too many educators viewing themselves as activists rather than educators, instructors, and getting caught up in whatever the latest thing is of the moment rather than focusing on core academic instruction. I think parents are done with that, and hopefully we will see a turnaround in that trend soon.

Mr. ADERHOLT. Before my time expires, Dr. Burke, welcome back to the subcommittee. Can you just briefly talk about what you are seeing on the data, on how it is showing that—regarding hiring trends in schools, both for teaching and nonteaching staff?

Ms. BURKE. Thank you for that question, Chairman. So if you go back to 1950—and I alluded to this briefly—there were 2.36 teachers for every nonteacher in a school district in America. Today, it is one-to-one. So stated differently, for every teacher you see in a typical district in America, there is a nonteaching, largely administrative counterpart.

As I mentioned, that 100 percent increase in the number of students in public schools across the country and that there was a 243 percent increase in the number of teachers. And I would just reiterate a 709 percent increase in the number of nonteaching staff from 1950 to today. So that is largely where the money is going.

Mr. ADERHOLT. So what is the overall percentage of teachers that are actually in the school system?

Ms. BURKE. 47.5 percent.

Mr. ADERHOLT. Thank you.

All right. My time is expired. I am going to turn to Ms. DeLauro.

Ms. DELAURO. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Just a couple of points. I think during the pandemic, I think it was President Trump who was at the helm during the pandemic.

I also think it is interesting that, once again, we are quoting the NAEP survey, and we have a crowd of folks at the moment who want to just eliminate NAEP and the ability to make an assessment, which is for you to draw your conclusions from. It just seems to be mindless to do in the agency that can give us the information as to whether scores are going up or whether they are going down and which we can make some judgments and which this committee can make judgments as to where we go.

Anyway, the education chapter of President Trump's Project 2025, authored by Dr. Burke, proposes to eliminate the Department of Education, cancel Title I over 10 years, and convert what is left of Federal education programs into a, quote, "no-strings-attached" block grant.

It would seem from the testimony that Dr. Burke and Ms. Gentles view the mere presence of any Federal requirements on appropriated funds as burdens. Quote, "burdens." But when I consider the programs that this subcommittee funds each year under edu-

cation laws like IDEA, Individuals with Disabilities Education, I see programs that guarantee fundamental civil rights to students with disabilities, the right to a free, appropriate public education, individualized education plan, parent and student participation.

Dr. Burke and Ms. Gentles, I am concerned that you confuse essential protections for vulnerable children in education programs for, quote, "burdens."

My question is to you, Mr. Kim. You were responsible for safeguarding the civil rights of students with disabilities during your tenure at the Department of Education. Can you explain to parents of children with disabilities across this Nation what it would mean if Elon Musk, President Trump, and House Republicans got their way and turned IDEA into a no-strings-attached block grant?

Mr. KIM. Thank you, Ranking Member, and thank you for the question.

Let me just start by saying that, you know, we don't have to go back very far in history to know what things were like for students with disabilities. Even prior to around the time of 1970, just going back a little bit in time, only one in five students with disabilities was educated in public schools.

There was a problem here where students with disabilities were labeled as emotionally disturbed, mentally retarded, often shuttled to hospitals or asylums. So we know that IDEA, when it was passed in 1975, as well as other civil rights laws in the early seventies, tried to reverse this and increasingly integrate students with disabilities into the American education system.

IDEA funding is very specific and very targeted to support students with disabilities. We have Part B of the IDEA grant, which is intended to help States and preschool programs provide for special education and related services. We have Part C, which really is to support early intervention for our youngest children, infants, and toddlers with disabilities. And it is critical in that part of the grant to expand enrollment for underserved infants and toddlers, including children from low-income backgrounds and children living in rural areas.

And then there is also a part of the IDEA which is targeted to help prepare special educators, funding that is so crucial at a time when States and districts have a lack or shortage of special educators that are well-trained to meet the diverse needs of all learners.

So block granting would lead to a lot of bad results here. It would increase the risk that funding doesn't go toward these specified purposes. There would be a lack of accountability over the use of funds.

I would also mention that IDEA has long been underfunded. And so what we need to be doing is to get to the authorized levels of IDEA rather than going in the reverse and block granting, which history shows and we have seen studies that when you block grant, not only does the usages get diverted to other purposes, but the actual amount for that program goes down, because Congress becomes more skeptical that the uses for that grant are being used in a way that was part of the intent of the original legislation.

And so overall, the funding goes down. The amounts, the usages get disbursed away from these targeted goals. And I think that ul-

timately harms children with disabilities and getting them the essential services that they need.

Ms. DELAURO. Is it true that the Federal Government has never met their obligation in terms of providing resources for the IDEA? I can't remember the percentages offhand, but we have never met what we established as the goal between the Federal and State match.

Mr. KIM. That is right.

Ms. DELAURO. Is that right?

Mr. KIM. That is right, Ranking Member. The amounts have never come close to the 40 percent authorized level, and so——

Ms. DELAURO. The forty percent of the authorized——

Mr. KIM. Yes.

Ms. DELAURO. Forty percent of the authorized level, we have never met that goal.

Is this right in terms of the number of about 7 million students with disabilities? How many children are we dealing with with disabilities?

Mr. KIM. I believe so. I could get you the exact numbers, but we know that that number, it is high and consistent across districts that every district has significant percentages——

Ms. DELAURO. So that, in fact, they could be essentially losing what their rights are in terms of what we passed with the IDEA legislation and turning that around. And we all know what block granting means. We don't have to be educated with that. Everybody on this committee, both sides, knows what block granting is. You take it, you send it, and it is less money and you don't deal with Federal resources.

Just make one more comment. My time is long overdue. But this is a pattern we are seeing. Yesterday, there was a vote on a budget reconciliation package. The end result of that would be in terms of Medicaid funding, which, again, would affect kids with disabilities. So it seems to be a pattern here. Thank you, Mr. Kim.

I yield back.

Mr. ADERHOLT. Dr. Harris.

Mr. HARRIS. Thank you.

The only pattern is misleading by the other side. That is the only pattern that is clear.

So let me discuss some of the things. Look, if our education system were succeeding with increased funding—this has been true year after year after year—we probably wouldn't be having this hearing. But the fact of the matter is our public education system is a dismal failure on the world stage, a dismal failure.

You can look at the OECD numbers. You can look at all the numbers versus our competitors. We don't—we don't compete, period. And if we hope to compete, and if we hope to compete on the global stage, we better fix this problem. And more money in the Department of Education is not going to fix it.

You know, someone on the other side of the aisle said, well, put your name on a bill if you want us to delete the Department of Education. My name is on the bill. We don't need the Department of Education.

So why is the Department of Education failing? Well, because it spends its time, instead of promoting reading, writing, and arith-

metic, as old-fashioned as that might be, because we are dismally failing on the reading and arithmetic part of the NAEP, which I will get to in a second, it spends its time promoting gender identity, men in women's bathrooms, men playing women's sports.

Yeah, go look. The Title IX regulation was published on a Department of Education letterhead. That is why we don't need a Department of Education, because it is not concentrating on what we should do, which is making sure that our students read and write and know arithmetic. That is what we should be concentrating on.

So I am going to ask the first question. And, Ms. Gentles, the OSP in Washington, D.C., you know I am a proponent of it. I have been for years, since Mr. Boehner left and asked me to advocate for it. Could you tell us what percentage of those people in that program are non-White? Because we did talk about this gap. What percent of that program is non-White?

Ms. GENTLES. Non-White in the D.C. OSP, I haven't looked at those numbers for a while, but I feel like it is like 98 percent.

Mr. HARRIS. Yeah, it is either 98 or 99. So let me see. This is a voluntary program where a parent who feels their child is not getting an adequate public education goes to a system funded by the government where they have the choice to go to another school. And it is overwhelmingly done by minority parents?

Don't we see the signals that what COVID showed to us is that our public school systems aren't in the business of education, they are in the business of supporting teachers unions, making sure men can go into girls' bathrooms and men can play in girls' sports. That is what they—that is what they do in the Department of Education. We don't need it. We simply don't need it.

Let's talk about NAEP. Any predictions on what the NAEP results will be for this year? Is it going to show us stunningly going to number one in international competition? No, it is going to show continued stagnation. And we don't do anything with that report, because it showed that for years. It shows no progress. We do exactly the same thing—and I think the chairman alluded to this—we expect a different outcome.

NAEP is a waste of money if you are not going to do anything with it, and we have done nothing with it for years and years. That is the facts.

Let's talk about block grants. Why are block grants a good idea? Because, Mr. Kim, we have a \$2 trillion budget deficit, and we better control the growth of spending. And one way to control the growth of spending and reduce Federal Government regulation is block granting it to the States, where you trust—and I know this is a foreign concept inside the Washington, D.C. Beltway—that local people actually make better decisions about how to educate their children.

And that in my county of Dorchester County, I trust my Board of Education, not the State Board of Education which, by the way, supports the concept of gender identity education in kindergartens now in Maryland and wants to make sure that they restrict the ability of parents to opt out of that kind of thing. I trust my local county much more.

And that is why block granting makes sense, because we can control the growth and we can control the growth of Federal spending that way.

Mr. HARRIS. Finally, it was said that 45 percent of school personnel are teachers. I don't get it, I thought that is what school was all about, it is about teachers and students. So you pile on more money, you pile on more administrators, you pile on more regulators and what do we end up with? Students who can't read, they can't write and they can't do math, and they will never compete in a global environment. It is high time that we greatly reconsider what we are doing in the Department of Education here and we should do it for our children. And we should do it for the children, for the parents of those children who were in failing public schools. They are crying out for that. I am a full supporter of OCCE included in our budget reconciliation, which will put the School Choice tax credits into other code so that we take the position that President Trump has taken, which is every parent deserves the choice of sending their child to a successful school.

I yield back.

Mr. ADERHOLT. Mr. Hoyer.

Mr. HOYER. Well, one could spend a lot of time responding to that, but I don't have the time. The fact of the matter is I hope everybody in this room agrees that we need to do the best we possibly can in educating our children. Frederick Douglass said, It is easier to educate young people than to repair broken men.

Ms. Gentles, you, I think, made a comment that special education teachers we need to pay more, agreeing with the concept that Mr. Kim put forward that money matters. There is no doubt that money matters. At the local level and State level, education is largely funded by property taxes. In my view, a very poor form of taxation, indicating what people can pay. At the Federal level we have a much greater ability to fund education and other objects and carry out the concept that our pledge of allegiance says we are one Nation, indivisible. And we know that children move from Mississippi to Maryland to Maine to Florida to California with a lot of incidents of that movement. So that we want to have American children educated in a way that they can compete, not only with those States, but as Mr. Harris points out, who doesn't want to participate in the debate apparently, across the world. And we need to do better.

And I want to thank you, Ms. Coleman, yours was I think a very positive contribution to this debate and a recognition of how difficult this debate is, because some of it is focused on who is going into whose bathroom. I ask people at town meetings when was the last time you were in the bathroom with a man, if I am talking to women or when was the last time you were in a bathroom with women, if I am talking to men. And they look at me like I am crazy. Maybe some of you are looking at the same way, because they—how would I know?

How would I know, because that is the issue. But we spend time doing politically—I was going to say a different word, but which the Governor of Utah, Republican, said was somewhat irrelevant because there were three or four or five people that it might affect in Utah. And you pointed out, Look, we need to deal with all the

children. I have some sympathy with charter schools A, because I think they perform a competitive role which ought to get us to higher competition so I don't have a problem with that.

But I do have a problem if they become drawdowns of resources on public schools, because public schools have made America great. That is what has made America great. That has the great leveling, not bringing people down, however.

I have a grandson in law, I suppose it would be called, who is going to go to MIT. He is 18, he is going to go to MIT next year. He is at public school. He got, I think, perfect on math in the SATs, and I guess a 750 or something on the English. He went to a public school, they must be doing something right.

But let me ask you, Mr. Kim, quickly, because as I said we don't have enough time to deal with this subject, it needs to be dealt with, we need to do better, we are not doing as well as we should do. By the way, Mr. Kim, am I correct that we cannot, at a Federal level, tell the local schools what curriculum they ought to be following?

Mr. KIM. That is right, the Federal Government is statutorily prohibited from getting involved in or influencing curriculum, and that has been the case for decades.

Mr. HOYER. In fact, Mr. Kim, am I correct that if we tried to do that, to withhold funds because of curriculum, that is illegal?

Mr. KIM. That is right. The laws clearly allow—the law states that States and districts are the ones that have autonomy and control over their own curriculum. States do most of the work. The Federal role is very limited already. The States are the ones that manage their operations, hire teachers, establish their own curriculum and standards through their State legislatures.

Mr. HOYER. Let me, in closing, Mr. Chairman, I know I have gone 23 seconds over, say that I am a strong supporter of Head Start, I think it ought to be in the Department of Education, quite frankly, not in human services, kids are at 3 and 4 years old ready to learn. The first Head Start program that was canceled for non-performance from 1965 to 1995, the first one that was canceled way by Donna Shalala under the Clinton administration for non-performance. We need to hold educators accountable because they are doing some of the most important things in our country. We ought to have a positive discussion on it. But I do not see how doing away with a department that is focused on the importance of education, being done away, with is accomplishing that objective.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. ADERHOLT. Mr. Moolenaar.

Mr. MOOLENAAR. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. And thank you for holding this hearing. I want to just start with just sort of some philosophical questions. And I wanted to ask all our panelists, do we agree that it is about the kids? Would you answer that question?

Ms. GENTLES. Absolutely.

Ms. BURKE. Yes.

Mr. KIM. Yes.

Ms. COLEMAN. Only.

Mr. MOOLENAAR. Okay. And I appreciate the gentleman from Maryland talking about the best we publicly possibly can educating

our children. And I think we are all in agreement on that. So I guess the next question I have is do you believe that parents are the primary educators of their children and should have the opportunity to choose the best educational fit for their children?

Ms. GENTLES. Yes, I have dedicated my career to that belief.

Ms. BURKE. Yes.

Mr. KIM. Yes.

Ms. COLEMAN. Yes.

Mr. MOOLENAAR. Okay. Well, that is impressive. So if we were in a situation, and I know in our Constitution in Michigan it talks about a free and appropriate education, a public education—and I appreciate the comments of the gentleman from Maryland that you don't want to take resources from one group of students and divert them to another group of students, but let's say we were able to fund this group of students in public education and also able to fund, using public dollars, this group of students for an education because those parents felt that they wanted an education that may have a religious component or something like that and it was not diverting money. Would you support that kind of an educational system?

Ms. GENTLES. I am supportive of education freedom.

Ms. BURKE. Yes, every dollar we spend should be student-centered and follow children to schools that work for them and are the right fit for them and align with their values.

Mr. MOOLENAAR. Okay.

Mr. KIM. There should always be options for private and religious education for students. The question here is how do we preserve and advance a public education system. And as you mentioned, Representative, to not divert dollars meant for public education to the—

Mr. MOOLENAAR. But if the funding was there for the public schools, would you prohibit a family from sending their child to a private school or a religious school simply based on you didn't think that the government should fund that?

Mr. KIM. If funding is there for public schools, that is the one thing that we are talking about today, absolutely parents always have the right to attend, they already legally have the right to raise and educate their children how they see fit in any kind of school environment, public, private, or homeschool.

Mr. MOOLENAAR. And using public dollars, you would support that?

Mr. KIM. The primary purposes of government is to fund education. And what I think the focus of this hearing is how important is it to preserve and—

Mr. MOOLENAAR. Well, sir, if I could interrupt you for a second, I feel like you are dodging my question. I mean, you are an attorney, you can probably—trying to figure out a way to say you do not support public dollars going to a private school. Is that a fair statement?

Mr. KIM. It's not fully—there is a nuance to that, because there is always public dollars that go toward private education. For example, with our student loans, they help students go to private schools as well and many private institutions receive that funding.

So it is not a unilateral question that I can answer in that particular way.

Mr. MOOLENAAR. All right. Ms. Coleman?

Ms. COLEMAN. I believe that those decisions should be made at the State and local level which we are seeing all across the country today.

Mr. MOOLENAAR. And then there is something called a Blaine Amendment, are you familiar with Blaine Amendment? Does that sound familiar?

Ms. GENTLES. Yes, it was an anti-Catholic provision that was put into many State constitutions during a very ugly time in our Nation's history.

Mr. MOOLENAAR. Do you believe it is discriminatory?

Ms. GENTLES. Absolutely, yeah. It was intended to be discriminatory against Catholics having their alternatives to the public school which were Protestant schools at the time.

Mr. MOOLENAAR. And then?

Ms. BURKE. Yes, I would quote the Supreme Court, they said the Blaine Amendment was discriminatory, that it was "born of bigotry and should be buried today." And thankfully we have moved in that direction. And 38 States initially had Blaine Amendments. If you look at a map, it was largely States out West as Western expansion took place. In the late 1800s, more and more States, as a condition of admittance into the Union, had to adopt what we are known as baby Blaine Amendments and they stuck around for many, many years over a century. But now we finally see that chiseled away, and we have States across the country that have adopted School Choice. The Supreme Court has held time and again that that is legal and permissible and the way forward for publicly funding. And I should add, public funding of education does not mean government delivery of schooling. There is a difference between public education, education for the public and public schooling.

Mr. MOOLENAAR. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. I know I am over my time. I yield back.

Mr. ADERHOLT. Mr. Pocan.

Mr. POCAN. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. And thanks to the witnesses today.

I kind of liked how you did that, Representative Moolenaar, like the quick questions going across. I am going to try that as well. I am going to try to follow your example.

So I think you all would consider yourselves experts in education funding, correct? Just nod your heads is fine for a quick one. You are not so sure you are an expert?

I will ask you the question, what percent of education funding could we cut, Federal funding? Just a percent, quick and easy, just a number, not a sentence, a number.

Ms. GENTLES. That is up to you. You all are the appropriators.

Mr. POCAN. So you don't have a number. Okay, next.

Ms. BURKE. I would say 90 percent.

Mr. Pocan. 90 percent wow, that is almost as much as some Republicans talk about genitalia on this committee, okay.

Next Mr. Kim.

Mr. KIM. I suppose I could say a negative number but I would say zero.

Mr. POCAN. Ms. Coleman.

Ms. COLEMAN. I honestly don't know.

Mr. POCAN. So you know what, I agree with you those who don't really know offhand, because it is kind of like a general let's throw something big out.

Last night, we had a bill in front of Congress that cut 45 percent, \$330 billion from education. Ms. Burke, you think they are halfway there. Everyone else, I mean, I think the problem is it is not an easy thing to do. Because if you start going after IDEA and Title I funds in places like Wisconsin where 40-somepercent of children benefit from that, either you get bigger class sizes or fewer teachers, fewer students or you are just going to shift that to the property tax.

So we are already going to steal essentially trillions, \$4.5 trillion from the middle class and those aspiring to be to give a tax break to Elon Musk and Donald Trump and everyone who belong at Mar-a-Lago. But now we are going to also transfer some funding potentially to their property taxes. People already just got stolen from so they can pay even more, but through a different form of tax so that Elon Musk and Donald Trump and all those people who belong at Mar-a-Lago get a tax cut.

So I just was interested because you all are experts, I consider you all experts on education funding. I appreciate your honest answers on that. There is one area that I do, and Mr. Kim, you brought it up, I want to do a little deeper dive is on vouchers, and I really think there is a difference between public charter and private charter schools as well. So I appreciate your comments as well, Ms. Coleman, so thank you for that.

But, you know, Wisconsin was one of the first States that tried that experiment. And it didn't go so as well, to be honest. Originally, we gave funding to schools where people who opened up schools said that they could put their hand on a book and read it, they put money towards Cadillacs, use it for education. There has been all kinds of problems. But right now, State after State, the studies have shown 75 percent of the people who get vouchers already have kids in private schools. So that is more tax policy than education policy. Once again, we are back to tax policy in dealing with that.

Also, in recent State voucher programs in Arizona and Florida families with the highest income brackets got those vouchers. So it kind of runs counter, I think, to what we are trying to do around public education to make sure that everyone has access.

In Milwaukee, when we actually did studies on this, we found the rates of students who exit their voucher school is approaching 20 percent annually, and that many of those former voucher students saw academic improvements when returning to public schools. So we have been doing this massive I would call scam to private schools. I think it is very different for public, Ms. Coleman. So just know when I say that I am putting a big asterisk on this.

But there are a lot of schools that aren't performing very well. We also had a study in Milwaukee that showed that there is no better performance levels. In fact, likely just the opposite in certain areas like math in other States, right? So my question, Mr. Kim, is, you know, there is a directive by President Trump to put even

more funding into transferring this. But if this is going to people who are already sending people to private schools, are not getting any better performance out of these schools and ultimately, these are folks who have the most wealth by all the studies we have, what exactly are we doing in that experiment?

Mr. KIM. Thank you for the question. Vouchers are spreading at a rapid pace throughout the country. There are 13 States right now that in which any student, no matter whether they have ever been to public school, can use taxpayer dollars to attend private school, to be homeschooled and so forth. And so there is a lot of issues here. One is the amount of State resources. And then, if the Federal law moves forward, then there would also be Federal resources and programs.

They take money away from the public system and convert them to uses for the private sector. Now, nothing against private sector, but here is what is happening: Vouchers transfer those monies. They are actually overwhelming for State legislatures. Once you start a voucher program, we see this in Arizona, the money spent for that program, required for that program was 10 times above the estimates for the expenditures of that program. Most of them already paying for students already in private schools, as you mentioned.

And when we have these programs and a massive transfer of students from public to private, what else goes out the door there? Accountability, teacher standards. What students should be taught according to academic standards that the State has autonomy in the public school system to prescribe, or to set forth what is important to be taught in education; and civil rights goes out the door, too, because in many cases, Federal civil rights laws are either limited or nonexistent as applied to private schools.

So we lose accountability. We lose the ability to ensure equality and a free and openness of any student no matter what their background, no matter what their sexual orientation or gender identity, no matter what their disability status is, no matter whether they have learned English growing up or not.

And this is what we are transferring the public system into, is that unaccountable system. And I will also add in voucher programs when the money goes and the resources of the State fisc goes toward that sector, you also lose the ability, under Federal laws, to ensure that States maintain their own contributions to education, because many of our Federal laws, they require not only here we are going to help you out for your most vulnerable students, but we are going to require that you maintain your effort in those areas yourself as a State. And without the ability to that, not only does the Federal money go down for education and State money, but the State's own contribution goes down for education. And this is a snowball effect that we can't let happen in this country, because every competitive industrialized nation in the world has a strong and vibrant public education system. We do not want to go down the road of Chile or Sweden where there is an erosion of public education and transfer to a private system that is not free and open to all students.

Mr. POCAN. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I just think I would be remiss if I didn't say in Milwaukee over a 15-period, 41 percent of

these schools failed and the average school only lasts about 4-1/2 years. So thank you for all your comments, Mr. Kim.

I yield back.

Mr. ADERHOLT. Ms. Bice.

Mrs. BICE. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. And thank you for the witness for being here this morning.

I appreciate with the opportunity to talk about K-12 funding. First, I want to say that it was mentioned earlier, and Ms. Gentles providing resources for teachers is important I want to reiterate that. We need to empower them, certainly with special education teachers, they deserve kudos in every way, shape or form because it is a difficult job.

I also want to give a shoutout to my sister-in-law who is a teacher at a charter school in Oklahoma City who does remarkable work. So thank you for acknowledging our teachers.

The Department of Education, and it has sort of been mentioned here earlier has expanded way beyond its original intent. When it was established in 1979, it was intended to provide targeted support, not to dictate education policy from Washington.

Mr. Kim, you just talked about accountability, and accountability in vouchers in States. The reality is States should be holding their districts accountable. Parents should be holding their districts accountable.

It is interesting to me that we are asking Washington to hold my State accountable. I don't want you to do that. I want you to give those dollars to my State and let them do what they do best within districts.

You talked about block grant funding goes down and doesn't actually, you know, get to the student. You know why? Bureaucracy, bureaucracy is the reason that those dollars don't get down to the student. You've seen programs like No Child Left Behind, ESSA, and others, that the requirements to get those dollars are so stringent that States have to file exemptions to be able to get some of the dollars because they can't meet the criteria. It doesn't make any sense.

I want to reiterate one point, we keep talking or hearing about student funding being slashed by Republicans, that is not happening. Let me just say this one thing, States and localities provide 86 percent of school funding, 86 percent is coming from the local communities to fund education. Federal overreach has added bureaucracy, restricting local decisionmaking and limiting school flexibility. And despite increased Federal spending, student achievement has not improved. And we heard that from Dr. Harris earlier. NAEP scores are declining, gaps in learning persist, schools struggle to meet students' needs. And let me say, this was happening preCOVID. COVID has exacerbated that because kids were not in classrooms. They were trying to learn via Zoom, which is not effective for most students.

The solution is not more Federal funding; it is smarter policy and less regulations. We need to ensure that Federal dollars where they are needed are spent efficiently with a focus on results. Why not incentivize States who are doing exceptional work? Why not reward them for good behavior? That is the kind of thing we should be

looking at. We need policies that prioritize accountability, flexibility, and most importantly, student success.

A couple of questions, Ms. Gentles, I want to ask you in what ways has Federal oversight restricted local schools from implementing effective reforms?

Ms. GENTLES. Well, we have been talking about onerous and burdensome reporting and monitoring. And I do think we need to be clear that in some States, we hear figures like 50 percent of the staff is allocated to just filling out those forms that go into some drawer somewhere in the U.S. Department of Education, and nothing is ever done with that. So the increase in the administrative staff at the State and district level, just for compliance purposes, takes away resources that need to be allocated to ensuring that students are successful, and that they are receiving what they need?

Mrs. BICE. Dr. Burke, if I could ask you, could you elaborate on how Federal education spending has increased while student performance has remained stagnant?

Ms. BURKE. Well, it has tripled in real terms, inflation adjusted over the past half century and student performance——

Mrs. BICE. So let me ask, to clarify, more money doesn't solve our issue?

Ms. BURKE. Correct. And if I could take 30 seconds because a lot of myths have been thrown out at this hearing just to address a few of them, particularly on IDEA. Mr. Kim mentioned earlier that students with special needs were, prior to 1975, mistreated terribly, and I agree. Public schools mistreated kids with special needs terribly prior to the protections in Federal law in 1975. Nothing that we have talked about or suggested would change anything in Federal protections for kids with special needs.

What we are talking about is putting funding to IDEA under new management and it has utterly failed. And that management is parents, right? These public schools, Mr. Kim talks about alleging unaccountable private schools, the only entities that are unaccountable are public schools. These are incredibly unaccountable public schools. If you are a parent of a child with special needs, too often your only hope to getting the services to which you are entitled under Federal law is to be able to afford an attorney to go through a very litigious processes to get these services, again, to which you are entitled. That is complete unaccountability. We are talking about IDEA not Title I. So IDEA funding, as I said, we are not talking about touching the funding, this is the law that governs it that we are talking about that provides the protections for the students.

Ms. DeLauro, you mentioned earlier there is an alleged gap between the appropriation and the authorization. You will know, as a Member of Congress, that there are numerous programs at the Federal level for which the appropriation is under the authorization. Congress often authorizes spending lots of money.

Ms. DELAURO. Yes, I understand very, very well.

Mrs. BICE. I reclaim my time, Mr. Chairman. I would like to reclaim my time.

Ms. DELAURO. If——

Mrs. BICE. You had your opportunity but I have reclaimed my time.

Ms. DELAURO. Okay then I will take it up at another point. Thank you very, very much for yielding time to answer a question.

Mrs. BICE. Mr. Chairman, my time has expired, so I want to yield back, but I want to thank the witnesses, and certainly Ms. Coleman for your champion of public charter schools.

Mr. HOYER. You are doing pretty well.

Ms. FRANKEL. Is it my time? All right, okay. Thank you.

I am Lois Frankel, I am from a Florida, that is who I am. Thank you for being here. I appreciate this discussion.

I will agree with something my colleague just said which is funding is not the only important issue obviously in educating our children. Obviously, education of policies, the culture of area, right, of the country, quality teaching.

And I want to say something, I have heard some ranting and raving about how the United States, the students here don't keep up with, I guess, their counterparts in other countries. And I want to just respectfully suggest that so many of the countries where children are doing well, they have very well-funded public education, all right? So that is something to note.

And I do not reject private education of the charter schools. I am for parents having choice, but I do reject sending them tax dollars. That is where I stand because I believe a quality education is one of the cornerstones of our democracy. It equips young people regardless of their background with knowledge, critical thinking, and opportunity so they can fully engage in society. Okay, I have given you my point of view.

Palm Beach County, my people have told me that if the Department of Education is eliminated, there will be reduced funding for tutoring services, teacher training, social services themes and families, and college readiness programs. So, of course, I think that would be a mistake to do that.

With that all said, Mr. Kim, I want to take advantage of the fact that you once were in the Office of Civil Rights, because there are a lot of things going on today on school campuses, both K-12 and college that really concern me. The anti-Semitic incidences which have drastically and dramatically risen all over the country, and we know that there is something like—I think there is something like 12,000 investigations that were currently going on regarding discrimination, racism, gender violence, those kinds of things. And all that has been paused by this administration for what I think are some reasons that one of my colleagues noted before.

Anyway, I want to ask you, based on your experience, first of all, why is it important, if it is important, for the Department of Education to take the lead on civil rights complaints in schools? Does the—when, if ever, does the Office of Civil Rights get to investigate a private or a charter school? And I know that we do have a Justice Department in a different agency, but there are certain functions that the Department of Education I know perform before you even get to litigation, I would like you to talk about that.

Mr. KIM. Yes, thank you. It is important for the Federal Government to have a strong civil rights enforcement role here in enforcing Federal civil rights laws. The Office of Civil Rights has a num-

ber of civil rights laws related to the Civil Rights Act, the Title IX, several disabilities rights law, the Americans with Disabilities Act, section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act, also the Age Discrimination Act.

So there are a number different statutes here at play. And so the Federal Government is—has a responsibility frankly to uphold the will of Congress as set forth by multiple decades to ensure equality in this country, equal rights, and to make sure that there is equal educational opportunity in our schools.

The OCR received 32,000 complaints across the country last year. That is likely a vast undercount, because as we know, not every student or a parent who has an issue with how their child was treated is going to have the wherewithal, or the time, or the courage, to file a civil rights complaint with the Federal Government. And so when you think about shifting that burden, that responsibility and burden because it's a big job, down to the States, now we have to go canvas our States. What are your civil rights departments like? Can you handle that volume of complaints? My organization's from a fairly well-resourced State in the State government in New Jersey. But I can tell you for a fact that they do not have the resources to handle civil rights complaints of that volume.

Just quickly, OCR does have some ability to—as to charter schools, charter schools are public schools and so, the civil rights laws freely apply to charter schools and charter school enforcement. With private schools, it is a different matter. In higher ed, for example, we know that because they receive Federal assistance that there is an ability to enforce civil rights laws in higher ed, to some extent. But at the K–12 level, largely, the civil rights laws application is more limited or non-existent. And so, there is a difference between public and private. And so it relates to this whole conversation we are having today about the shifting of our public education system to the private sector. Then you foreclose a lot of the Federal civil rights enforcement activity around discrimination by race, English learner status, by sex, and all the disability rights laws under multiple laws and sort of basically upholding the purpose of the IDEA as well.

And then, finally, I will just mention that there is talk of dispersing civil rights functions to other agencies, like the Department of Justice. I just want to say that it is—I want to share that there is a benefit to civil rights enforcement in education happening in an education department. Many of the enforcement resolutions that come out of these investigations rely not—once you determine that there is a legal problem that needs to be remedied, the remedies actually applied—what comes to bear in those remedies are education policy, for example, a civil rights investigation involving multilingual learners. Well, let's say the district has to do something to better improve the outcomes for English learners, that requires education policy, knowledge of what best practices are to serve those students whether they need dual language immersion, whether they need other related services, to what extent should they be pulled out of regular classrooms versus being integrated in classrooms.

So there is education policy involved in those remedies, and also, data and research. Best practices are informed by data and research. Not to mention the interaction with school districts and universities all around the country. That kind of relationship and expertise is why civil rights enforcement can't just be handled by any other agency when it comes to education, it should be integrated within the other units of the Department.

Ms. FRANKEL. Thank you so much. I yield back. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Mr. ADERHOLT. Mr. Clyde.

Mr. CLYDE. Thank you, Chairman. And thank you to our witnesses for being here today. I appreciate the opportunity and the discussion on whether increased Federal funding in K-12 schools truly improves student outcome or whether it doesn't.

For decades, we have seen Washington pour more and more money into our educational system, operating under the assumption that simply spending more will lead to better student performance.

Since the 1960s, taxpayers have spent nearly \$3 trillion on Federal education funding, that is a lot of money. Per-pupil spending in public schools has skyrocketed since then, yet test scores have failed to meaningfully improve. Reading and math scores have either flatlined or declined, and K-12 public school enrollment has been on the decline. And the COVID pandemic has actually accelerated this trend. Remote learning was a disaster, and \$190 billion, as I think was mentioned, was wasted.

Meanwhile, the U.S. continues to spend more per student than nearly any other developed Nation. Yet, American students are falling behind their international peers, the data is clear, simply increase spending is not the solution. Rather than continuing to throw money at a broken system, I think we should focus on what actually works, empowering parents, giving States the flexibility to innovate and expanding School Choice so families aren't trapped in failing schools based on their ZIP Code.

And I want to give a shout-out now to my home State of Georgia, who literally just passed last year and will implement as of March 1st this year, the Promise Scholarship Program. Now, they have capped the amount of money at about \$140 million. But that means 22,000 students that are enrolled in public schools right now, in a failing public school, can actually, their parents now have that opportunity to send them to a school that is not failing so they get a good education.

So we are seeing that now. The result, okay, is the State is taking charge and taking action, all right. It is not the Federal Government. So school choice, whether through vouchers, charter schools, technical education or homeschooling forces schools to be more accountable to students and prepare them for the workforce. When families can choose the best educational environment for their children, then the students succeed. We see this in States that have embraced School Choice where students outperform their peers in traditional public schools.

So I think we need an approach that prioritizes student achievement, reduces Federal overreach and spending and ensure that every student has access to high-quality education. American stu-

dents deserve a better system than one that prioritizes bureaucracy over results.

So, Ms. Gentles, first question for you. You highlighted that academic performances is at such historic lows, such as 70 percent of fourth and eighth grade students unable to read proficiently, and only 28 percent of eighth graders proficient in math. Given this undeniable failure, how do you think the money should be best allocated, the Federal money?

Ms. GENTLES. Yes, and I would like to reiterate that when we talk about 30 percent of students being proficient, we have 40 percent who are below basic. So more students are below basic than are proficient, and that is alarming. We have a crisis on our hands.

Allocating funds needs to be done in a way that's student-centered. I think it was misinterpreted that I was arguing for paying special education teachers more as an argument for increasing funding willy-nilly.

No, we need to be smart about how we are allocating funding. So a State like Louisiana that is celebrating education and embracing education freedom, providing options for students, embracing science of reading, improving literacy, both training for teachers, and then also implementation at the school level. But then also, like when they have experienced a challenge with recruiting special education teachers, math and science teachers at the high-school level, they are paying them more, so that allocation matters, not just a big number going up while test scores go down which chart after chart State after State shows, but allocating in a wise way. But absolutely at the core that education freedom has to be there.

Mr. CLYDE. Okay, thank you very much.

Dr. Burke, you noted that only \$0.65 of every Federal education dollar actually reaches the classroom, which is a stunning statistic, with the rest swallowed by bureaucracy. Meanwhile, the Department of Education has ballooned in size employing thousands of bureaucrats who dictate policy from Washington. In your view, what specific Federal programs should Congress immediately eliminate to cut waste? And what steps should we take to ensure that Federal education dollars, if they must exist, are spent directly on students rather than expanding bureaucratic payrolls?

Ms. BURKE. Thank you for that question. The onus should be on the Department of Ed, on Congress, to justify the continued existence of this failed agency.

In terms of what programs to cut, we have used a three-part test to determine what programs to keep. So I will give you the inverse answer, is a program ineffective? Is it duplicative? Or is it inappropriate for the Federal Government to run? If it checks any of those boxes, the program should be cut. That means, as I mentioned earlier, about 90 percent of Federal programs that the Department of Education runs would fail that test, meaning they would need to be cut. Those are largely the programs that are competitive grant programs, not the larger formula-funded programs like IDEA and Title I, where funding would be kept but would be managed by other agencies. In the case of IDEA moving it to HHS, same with Title I, for example. Data collection was mentioned at length, move that over to the Department of Commerce under the Census Bu-

reau where it would make more sense for data collection to take place.

And if I could just quickly on NAEP, because NAEP has come up quite a few times during this hearing, just to put the facts out there, what was cut was not the main NAEP assessment for 9-year-olds and 13-years-olds. It was the 17-year-old long-term trend assessment. So it is two different assessments that we are talking about. I just wanted to put that out there to clear the record.

And then just finally, on the research on education choice which Ms. Gentles talked about very nicely, we have studies that are good and studies that are bad. The studies that are good are randomized control trial evaluations that shows the effectiveness empirically of a given school choice program. There are 16 of those. Of those 16 studies, RCTs that have been conducted over time, 10 shows positive benefits for all or some students in terms of academic achievement; four show no results, no difference between the private School Choice program and the public system; and then two show negative results, indeed, two show negative results. Those two results are unique to one State that heavily regulated its School Choice program such that quality private schools refused to participate. And so, that is a lesson on over-regulation, not the efficacy of School Choice.

Mr. CLYDE. Thank you very much. And I am over my time. I yield back.

Mr. ADERHOLT. Ms. Dean.

Ms. DEAN. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you, ranking member. And I thank all of our guests today, guests in the room and the guests who have testified before us.

I am former educator, I am Madeleine Dean from suburban Philadelphia. I am a former educator myself. I am also a former State representative who paid close attention to education funding when I was there. And I am a firm believer that how we educate our children determines not just their future, but our own. I truly, truly believe that. And so, I will tell you that I am a little puzzled by the opening predicates and some of the arguments from colleagues on the other side of this dais reciting grim statistics of failure, of students struggling, and then the conclusion, cut Federal funding.

To me, that is just an extraordinary nonsequitur. It doesn't follow that if you are worried about our students that you want to reduce funding to our students, you want to reduce that which we know, programs that we know are working. So I question both the dark statistics and the extremely odd conclusions.

I would think I believe that elected representatives ought to be fighting for greater investments in our students. Sure, look for the waste, look for the redundancies, but look for the investments that are making a difference, whether it is counsel or special ed, IDEA, investments in our children, investments in our families.

I am going to try to get in quick three questions. Let's see where I was going to start. I want to tell you a little bit about Pennsylvania funding for education. As I said, I care desperately about it for K-12. Pennsylvania schools received \$4.67 billion. American Rescue Plan I was very proud to be a part of provided—this is 2021—provided Pennsylvania and many, many other States, Penn-

sylvania with \$5 billion in emergency funding to deal with what we were dealing with and what families and schools were dealing with, to support longer term recovery of education following COVID. And yet, take a look at where we are, Project 2025, page 319 reads “Federal education policy should be limited and ultimately the Federal Department of Education should be eliminated.”

This is the wish of this administration, that is the path that they are on. I don’t support that path. It is a failure to invest in our kids, it is a failure to invest in ourselves.

Mr. Kim, how has education, Federal education funding affected Pennsylvania students? That is my first question and then I am going to ask you about IDEA. And then I am going to ask you about Federal support for some of my colleagues, Federal education support for some of my colleague’s States. Number one, what difference have we made in Pennsylvania?

Mr. KIM. I think school funding in Pennsylvania has been really affected and benefited by the investment of Federal funds, particularly in the wake of the pandemic, I would say that we know that of those funds now there may be some here who say that those funds have been wasteful or not well spent, but the research actually doesn’t bear that out. That we know that those funds have been led to improvements, recovery from learning loss. We have to acknowledge that the pandemic was very harmful in terms of student learning loss. And so there was about a half year of learning loss experienced by students all around the country due to the devastating pandemic.

But the rescue funds did help school districts recover about 20 to 30 percent of those losses, that is even greater for low-income students, the recovery for low-income students and I think in cities like Pennsylvania who really did use those funds well to provide things like before and after school learning, summer programs.

Ms. DEAN. Philadelphia school system.

Ms. KIM. Philadelphia school academic supports. The games were much greater. They were upwards to 50 percent recovery from learning loss. So the research shows that States like Pennsylvania and other States really did benefit from that infusion of funds. It’s a small—it was a bump up in the Federal share for education in the wake of the pandemic. But usually, historically, if you look at the last quarter century the Federal share of education has been around between 7 and 9 percent, but it is during times of an emergency where the Federal Government has the ability to help rescue States, to help them provide critical education and services.

After the Great Recession and after the pandemic, those were the two times where the Federal share went up to help States to recover. And that is why it is so critical to have a robust Federal role, especially in times of emergency when we are all scrambling to recover, to get our kids back in school, to provide them with the mental health supports and the education that they lost during that time.

Ms. DEAN. I thank you for that and my time is going to be so tight here. I want to just note that I wish we would fully fund IDEA. My parents in my district wished we would do that and they are gravely concerned about cuts to IDEA.

Finally, tell us about red States versus blue States in Federal education funding? And what would it mean if the red States suffered an extraordinary wipeout of Federal funding for education?

Mr. KIM. Well, I will say that in 2022 the last full year for which we have full data available, about a third of the States in the country relied on Federal funds to provide one-sixth or more of the cost of running their K–12 schools. This is well above the national average. And if you—the States are—I can read them if you want, but they are—they are largely, you know, States that are in the south and States that—just a second here, if I can pull it up and test my organizational abilities here very quickly. So the States that disproportionately relied on Federal funds—

Mr. ADERHOLT. Could you make it real brief, you are already over time.

Mr. KIM. Yes. Mississippi, South Dakota, Arkansas, Montana, Alaska, Kentucky, North Carolina, Louisiana, Oklahoma, Tennessee, Arizona, West Virginia, North Dakota, Texas, Idaho, Alabama, Florida, and New Mexico.

Ms. DEAN. So Representatives from those States who were arguing to shutdown Federal funding for education are doing it at the risk to their own students.

Mr. KIM. They are the highest reliance of Federal funding. And also most of those States are the lowest in terms of the State contribution to education.

Ms. DEAN. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. ADERHOLT. Mr. Moore.

Mr. MOORE. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and thank you for the hearing. This is certainly a subject that is really interesting to me. I was previously the State Treasurer of West Virginia just a few months ago before coming here to Congress where I set up and stood up under the most expansive educational School Choice programs in the country, called the Hope Scholarship program, which has been hugely successful in our State. Now, obviously you mention my State on that list, we are one of the poorer States in the country. That is right.

And I will tell you that this has had a tremendous outcome. It has raised or educational outcomes for our students that have used this program. This isn't a voucher program. This is completely School Choice. We set up a digital wallet where people can take their portion of State tax dollars and apply it to private school, homeschool, whatever school they want to go to, and it has really, I mean, just saved people's lives. And we have people in the southern coalfields of West Virginia that are driving an hour and a half to go send their kids to some Catholic school, which they are certainly not Catholic, many of them, to try to get a better education.

Now you were right, Mr. Kim, for West Virginia, our per-person students funding formula, one-third of it is State money, two-thirds of it is Federal money. Now for me, I don't think there is any requirement. I don't know why we need to have the Department of Education. I would vote every day of the week I am here to eliminate it if it were possible.

What I think you need to do is—I am not talking about getting rid of the funding, block grant it back down to the States and let the States control the money. It just makes all the sense in the

world for us to have control of those dollars and educate our kids the best way that we see fit.

And we have seen the educational attainment since Hope Scholarship has come online rise, but in the public schools, we did, at the exact same time by the way, three successive teacher pay raises in West Virginia, and continued to watch educational attainment decline.

It is not working, it's just not working, it's not. And we have got to give parents the ability to have choice in this country. Now guess what, if you are rich, you are already sending your kid to private school. This is not what this program is about, you have a choice. You have a choice by the virtue of being rich, you do whatever you want. This is about those families that are living in the coalfields of West Virginia to have the ability to be on an even playing field with these rich folks, which we don't have a lot of them in West Virginia, but to have the ability to be able to go to those type of private institutions or educate your kids at home.

So to that point, I have not heard anybody talk about this, but Ms. Burke, if you could touch on this. I am a big believer on national School Choice, I think we need to have national access to educational savings accounts across the country. And for us in West Virginia, it would be great to be able to tap into those Federal dollars for our students that have selected School Choice and be out there. Could you talk a little bit about national School Choice and what you think that could look like?

Ms. BURKE. Sure, thank you for the question, Congressman Moore. And if I could just say West Virginia was truly a pioneer in advancing a universal ESA for families there. I mean, we for so long, the movement just waited with bated breath for fate to finally do a universal school choice program, and West Virginia, following Arizona, did that. So it was just tremendous to see for those families.

And to your earlier question, you can imagine the situation in which we block grants, the bulk of existing Federal dollars for Title I, for IDEA, et cetera, that is West Virginia. West Virginia policymakers could then decide we want to take that block grant and leverage it into an additional pot of money for families to marry with the existing scholarship program in West Virginia. You can really plus up the funding for that program.

On your question about Federal options for advancing School Choice there are many options, there are considerations around the Federal tax credit scholarship. There are other options that are out there, more interesting and newer options, like conditioning a State municipal bond exclusion on whether or not they have a private School Choice program. There are populations over which the Federal Government has clear jurisdiction. ESAs for military families. Active-Duty military families are assigned to whatever public school is closest to the duty station to which their parent is assigned. Give them school choice, that is a national security imperative.

Kids in Washington, D.C. make the District of Columbia, which is under the jurisdiction of Congress and all-school choice district, universal formula-funded ESA for every single kid in D.C.

And then finally, Native American children who attend the worst performing schools in America, that was actually the title of a political article a few years ago in 2015 how Washington created the worst schools in America. Those schools are run by the Bureau of Indian Affairs, give those children the opportunity to attend a private school of choice.

Mr. MOORE. That makes all the sense in the world, my time is about to expire. But I think we need to have universal School Choice for these kids. Look, we have not had everybody leave the public school system in West Virginia. There is a lot of benefits to the public school system that provide, whether it is extra curriculars, or maybe certain type of curriculum and things that they do where they are going to stay in public schools. But the end of day to me, if we don't make these dollars competitive, right, and I have heard—I got sued by teachers' unions over this and everything else, and every time they complained and were screaming about this, it was always about what it was doing to them and no one was talking about what it was doing to the kids. And they don't have their own union, just to be clear. So we need to have national school choice in the country. There has got to be access for everybody no matter what and everybody can access these funds.

Thank you.

Mr. ADERHOLT. Mrs. Watson Coleman.

Mrs. WATSON COLEMAN. Thank you, Chairman.

Thank you for being here to all the witnesses. I don't want to do a preamble. I just need to ask a series of questions. The first one is a yes or no.

Do you support the elimination of the Department of Education, yes or no?

Ms. GENTLES. Yes.

Ms. BURKE. Yes.

Mr. KIM. No.

Ms. COLEMAN. Can't do a yes or no. Most important is to maintain the funding streams and critical programs.

Mrs. WATSON COLEMAN. Thank you. In charter schools, you can accept a student into a charter school. If that student doesn't work out, like in October, September and November, can you send that child back to the public school from which that child came, yes or no?

Ms. COLEMAN. It is State-dependent. Largely no.

Mrs. WATSON COLEMAN. State by State?

Ms. COLEMAN. State by State, but largely no.

Mrs. WATSON COLEMAN. If they do send a child back, does the money stay with the charter school?

Ms. COLEMAN. No.

Mrs. WATSON COLEMAN. Does it go back? Okay. In New Jersey, it stays with the charter school.

Mr. Kim, are you located in New Jersey?

Mr. KIM. Yes, our organization is located in New Jersey.

Mrs. WATSON COLEMAN. New Jersey to me has one of the most segregated school systems in the entire country, and we have been trying to figure that out. And I have worked with the Education Law Center from the time I was in the executive branch to the legislative branch, and I can't quite figure out why we can't get there

other than we don't want to confront the biggest monkey in the room, and that monkey is racism.

I believe in choice. I believe in public choice. I believe you should be able to send your child to anywhere you want to send your child in the public school system because you are paying taxes in that State. But that is not what we have. We have all kinds of strange things, how to get them into parochial schools, how to get them into private schools.

Ms. GENTLES—is that right? Thank you. What is your vision for funding education? Where would that be if it were not in the Department of Education? And can I have short answers, because I have got that question to ask of another person.

Ms. GENTLES. So for Federal education funding, the Title I and the IDEA could go back to HHS, if needed. I think it is worth exploring that. That is, of course, where it started when there was an HEW before the Department of Education.

Something that we haven't talked about is the incredible burden that the competitive grants cause. I have heard statistics within the Department of Education that even though the competitive grants are only like 5 percent of the funding, that half the staff over at the U.S. Department of Education are working on competitive grants. So block granting those competitive grants, sending them straight to the States.

Mrs. WATSON COLEMAN. And when you block grant them, where would you put them, what department?

Ms. GENTLES. How does the funding flow? I don't have a strong opinion on that, but I don't know that Labor, HHS. There are plenty of options.

Mrs. WATSON COLEMAN. Thank you. Do you, Ms. Burke, Dr. Burke?

Ms. BURKE. Have a strong opinion on where the money would go?

Mrs. WATSON COLEMAN. Yes.

Ms. BURKE. So at the end of the day, every single dollar should be controlled by families, full stop.

Mrs. WATSON COLEMAN. How does it get to them?

Ms. BURKE. The best way to do that is a two-part path. One is block granting these large formula-funded programs, and then giving States the option to make those student-centered and portable.

So what I described a minute ago is the West Virginia example. And again, I think keeping a lot of the large formula grant programs, not all of them, and moving them to more appropriate receiving agencies, HHS. I would say that OCR and ED should go over to DOJ, OCR, that it is duplicative. So there are places for—

Mrs. WATSON COLEMAN. Not this Department of Justice.

Ms. BURKE. There are places for programs to go that are more appropriate.

Mrs. WATSON COLEMAN. So Mr. Kim, is not an important function of the Federal Government as it relates to civil rights and education was to make sure that the States who had no respect, no desire to see that poor children, Black children, Brown children, non-English-speaking children weren't getting the same access to equal education, is that not the function, one of the functions of the Office of Civil Rights?

Mr. KIM. That is right. The Office for Civil Rights enforces multiple laws that came up through the civil rights era, war-on-poverty era, to make sure that across the country that there was enforcement and equality on these protected categories. And so that was what Congress intended, and then that is why the enforcement responsibility stays at the Federal level in the Department.

Mrs. WATSON COLEMAN. So, Mr. Kim, what is the impact of the elimination of the Department of Education on equal access to education? Even though that is a goal and we have not met it yet, what is the impact of the elimination of the Department of Education and the accountabilities in it on actually ensuring that our children get an education that prepares them for the future, so that they can take care of me when I get older?

Mr. KIM. The function of equal access actually runs throughout the Department. You know, when we—it is not just OCR, although OCR is a critical agency. There are also units that deal specifically with students with disabilities, with multilingual learners, and even the elementary and secondary unit. All of those programs essentially are trying to ensure access for the most vulnerable students.

So to lose that ability to focus on the most vulnerable and ensure equality would be really devastating to this country. We have to remember that, first of all, the Department is the smallest agency by far, minuscule compared to the larger agencies that have hundreds of thousands of employees. There is not a lot of fat in this agency. So, really, dispersing the functions to different agencies would be really harmful to the public, because they would have to, schools would have to go to multiple different agencies to seek redress or help, which is really inefficient for State and local actors as well.

Mrs. WATSON COLEMAN. Thank you, Mr. Kim.

Mr. ADERHOLT. Ms. Letlow.

Mrs. WATSON COLEMAN. I understand, because of the history of the amount of time you have given other colleagues that I have got at least 3 or 4 more seconds that I will use.

Mr. ADERHOLT. I have tried to be lenient to both sides. I know we went over.

Mrs. WATSON COLEMAN. And, Mr. Chairman, you are, but I have been listening and I have been watching, and so I know that I had a few more seconds. I almost forgot the point that I wanted to raise, though.

Mr. ADERHOLT. Well, it is not a magic number. I just try to sort of a cutoff point so—

Mrs. WATSON COLEMAN. We have a lot to do to ensure that our children get a decent education. I agree with you when you say it is not all about money, it is how the money is spent.

One of the things I want to raise is that some of that money that is going to schools now are for things like magnetometers and police officers, because our Republican colleagues won't help us get guns off the streets of the United States of America. And perhaps if we did that, we could put more money into counseling, and teaching, and less into having to protect.

And I thank you and I yield back.

Mr. ADERHOLT. Like I said, let me clarify. I try to be fair, and I guess I may just have to go back to the 5 minute.

Mrs. WATSON COLEMAN. You were good. It was just like everybody was at least 58 seconds over.

Mr. ADERHOLT. I think you have set the record now. So it is over.

Ms. Letlow.

Ms. LETLOW. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

And thank you to all the witnesses for sharing my passion for education. I think we can all agree in this room that if you educate a child, you give them a future, and so I thank you for all your efforts in that.

It is no secret that I am a huge proponent of charter schools. And as I visited my charter schools, it has been increasingly clear how tedious and costly and long the administrative process is for starting new charter schools.

And it is important that new schools are high quality, and up to serving our students, as these schools are shaping our future leaders. It is also important that the Department of Education is not creating overly burdensome hurdles to the point where it discourages prospective charter applications and hinders innovative approaches to education.

So to address these concerns, last Congress I introduced the Empower Charter Schools Educators to Lead Act, a bipartisan bill which authorizes States who receive grants to Charter Schools Program to use a portion of their funding to support the application process in the development of new charter schools. I am in the process of reintroducing that bill very soon.

Mrs. Coleman, as head of the National Alliance for Public Charter Schools, how could access to a planning grant and increased technical assistance ease the way for additional charter schools to open in my State of Louisiana and across the country?

Ms. COLEMAN. Thank you so much for your leadership on this issue. We are incredibly grateful for you. Thank you.

It is incredibly difficult to open a new charter school today. Between the increasing political nature of the authorization process, and the cost of new buildings and, as you mentioned, the really complex and burdensome requirements that the Department of Education is putting on new charter schools, it is harder than it has ever been to get new campuses open. So the work that you are doing to ease some of that burden is incredibly valuable for our community.

The way that those planning grants will work is for existing teachers today in our public schools to have an idea and a dream about how they could do something a little bit different or a little bit better to make a school community that would serve their children, or their community well. To make that dream a reality requires today educators to quit their job and spend a full year or more in the application drafting process.

That is unreasonable. It is a burden that teachers should not have to bear just because they have an idea about how to serve kids better. So these planning grants would give them the support they need while they are drafting their application so that they can turn in an application to their State-authorizing agencies to get approval for those new schools and be ready to roll. As soon as the State-authorizing entity says yes to them, they can open the doors more quickly and more effectively.

Ms. LETLOW. Thank you for your answer. I am so hopeful this legislation will get through. I was inspired by a charter school that was opened in northeast Louisiana called the ACE Charter School. And I know that the founder spent over 2 years in the planning process, 250 pages back and forth.

And this is a charter school to provide education for autistic students, and the waiting list is through the roof as far as students trying to get in. So I am hopeful that we can work together to get that passed.

Okay. My next question: So over the last few years under the previous administration, we witnessed parents being pushed to the side, even being labeled domestic terrorists. However, parents truly desire to increase transparency around their children's education and simply have a seat at the table. It is common sense.

And rather than opening the doors to welcome parents in as partners, some of my colleagues, outside advocacy groups, and teachers' unions would rather slam them shut and have the government bureaucrats make the decisions.

I worked in education before I came to Congress, and I am also a mother. And I can tell you without a shadow of a doubt that when schools attempt to educate children without buy-in from parents, it leads to disastrous results. And I personally don't know a teacher who doesn't welcome parental involvement.

Last Congress, I introduced and worked with my colleagues to pass H.R. 5, the Parents Bill of Rights Act, which was about finding ways that we can put parents and educators at the same table and have a productive dialogue about how we can help our children succeed.

Ms. Gentles, thank you for the shout-out to Louisiana earlier. And Dr. Burke, I understand you both are long-time education policy leaders. How does parental involvement in their child's education improve student success and outcomes?

Ms. GENTLES. I think everybody in the room would agree that parental involvement is essential. Studies have shown that. It is just a fact in education policy. There are things that are fluid over time with education policy. There are trends. That holds steady. That holds true.

And unfortunately, we do have a culture now that often is union controlled, bureaucratic controlled. And the system takes priority over the student, and the parents are shut out.

And so there are going to be steps that need to be taken at the Federal level to address FERPA, to address PPRA, things that you tackled in the Parents Bill of Rights, and I look forward to seeing what you do in this Congress with that.

Ms. BURKE. And if I could just add, you know, the secret sauce of school choice isn't necessarily shifting the funding, but it is about increasing parental involvement. That is what it does at the end of the day, is it puts the dollars in the hands of the people who care more about their children than anybody else in the whole wide world and enables them to make that decision.

And, you know, one of my favorite education policy quotes of all time was from Dr. Patrick Wolf at the University of Arkansas who said that what school choice really does is it moves parents from

the margins to the center of their children's academic experience. And so, I think that really is key.

Ms. LETLOW. Thank you so much to all the witnesses.

I yield back.

Mr. ADERHOLT. Mr. Harder.

Mr. HARDER. Thank you so much, Chairman Aderholt, for holding this hearing today. This is a very personal issue for me. Growing up, my brother David had an IEP, and I have seen firsthand how the special education funding provided by our Federal Government had an enormous role in his life.

I saw how transformational and life-changing it was to see all the investments his teachers made in him, and into the man that he is today. And I am grateful for that, and I think not just was it the right thing to do, it has actually saved our community and our country a lot of money by making sure that he and others were able to get on the right path in life.

And I think it is a little frustrating to hear some of the comments that we have had in this committee today about how what we are talking about today is block granting special education funding to States, shifting funding around, when we are sitting here the morning after a vote that would cut \$330 billion out of the Education Department.

So this isn't shifting funding. We are not talking about keeping levels the same and just giving the responsibilities to somebody else, we are talking about massive cuts, cuts that would be dwarfed by the current amount of resources that we have to IDEA and Title I dollars.

That would mean fewer teachers. It would mean fewer counselors. It would mean fewer special education aides, larger class sizes, less behavioral services, and ultimately, worse educational outcomes for kids like my brother, the most vulnerable kids in our classroom.

And frankly, it makes me a little angry when I hear folks talking about moving the ball around and trying to hide what this funding is actually meaning, when in reality, we are talking about cutting resources for the kids that need it most.

So I would really just love to have a little bit more clarity from our witnesses here today about what this is going to mean for our students, and whether or not they actually support what we actually saw happen in Congress last night, which was a cut to the Department of Education and a massive cut ultimately to special education resources that are going to kids.

Dr. Burke, do you support gutting and cutting funding for special education, yes or no?

Ms. BURKE. No. I support putting those dollars in the hands of parents.

Mr. HARDER. So you would have voted no on the bill last night.

Ms. BURKE. Now, look, that is not what was in the bill. First of all, this is a reconciliation bill where you can only tackle mandatory spending.

Mr. HARDER. You support cutting \$330 billion from the——

Ms. BURKE. There is no mandatory spending in——

Mr. HARDER. Yes or no?

Ms. BURKE [continuing]. IDEA. And so all that was tackled in that budget bill was higher education spending. So I think we are probably talking about two different proposals.

Mr. HARDER. So you do not support cutting \$330 billion from the Department of Education?

Ms. BURKE. First of all, \$330 million you said, or billion?

Mr. HARDER. Billion.

Ms. BURKE. Billion? The Department of Ed's budget is less than \$100 billion. So there is literally no way they could have cut \$300 billion from the Department of Ed.

Ms. DELAURO. It is over 10 years.

Ms. BURKE. So the budget, there is no way that they cut \$330 billion from the Department of Ed with discretionary spending, because that cannot happen in that particular proposal. So—but I would support taking those existing Federal dollars for students with special needs and putting those dollars in the hands of families to choose an appropriate public education or private education for their children.

Mr. HARDER. Your opposition is noted, and thank you. It is great to hear that you do not support cutting IDEA funding, which is in opposition to where most of the members of this committee are.

Ms. Coleman, do you support cutting higher education funding or special education funding?

Ms. COLEMAN. No.

Mr. HARDER. Tremendous. Ms. Gentles?

Ms. GENTLES. Absolutely not. As you might have seen in my testimony, I had a child with an IEP cried in my car after every meeting. I don't think that the IDEA process is working. I know it is not. Parents have to sue to get services and accommodations. But IDEA is essential, and let's get that funding allocated in a way that serves students.

Mr. HARDER. Great. Mr. Kim.

Mr. KIM. Absolutely not. And we need to also worry about how IDEA funding not only would be reduced with the upcoming budgets but also converted into block grants or vouchers, because that would then frustrate the IDEA itself because those entities receiving those grants, if they remained for special education purposes, would no longer be subject to the IDEA.

So there is a lot of danger here in not only reducing, but in shifting the way the money is distributed that could lead to an exodus from the civil rights protections that this Federal Government has erected over the last 60 years.

Mr. HARDER. Well, thank you. But I think the most important point that I would like to make is that we are not talking about a shift. We are not talking about keeping funding levels the same.

I think it is a little disingenuous to act like that is what the discussion is actually about when we are the morning after a vote that would advance an agenda to cut enormous amounts of money from education, and ultimately, from Title I and special education programs, because there is only one way that we can make that work.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and I yield back.

Mr. ADERHOLT. Okay. Well, we have had a very good hearing.

Ms. DeLauro, I think you want to make some closing, but I have literally—I am speaking and I have got to leave in about a minute, so if you could keep your comments to a minute.

Ms. DELAURO. It is going to be—it won't be for a minute.

Mr. ADERHOLT. Yes, I just, like I said, yeah.

Ms. DELAURO. It won't be for a minute. I will be very clear.

Ms. Coleman, first of all, I want you to know I do support charter schools. I do not want charter schools to supplant public education where 90 percent of our kids are, but there is a role for public charters. But the fact of the matter is, is that we can't move in a direction that supplants our public education system.

You should know about this subcommittee. On the Republican side, there was an amendment a number of years ago, the Massie amendment, and that said, let's cut all Federal funds for K-12 education.

I don't know if any of you agree with that, but I will tell you there was one person who was not in the Congress at the time, and there are eight people on this committee. One was not here, but five of the seven remaining people voted to take out Federal resources for K-12 education. It is a reality. 166 Republican Members did that, five of seven on this committee. About \$42 billion.

So the notion that we can just willy-nilly cut education, it is consistent. It is not a one-off and so forth.

Now, you know, Dr. Burke authored the Project 2025 piece on education. So, quite honestly, it doesn't surprise me that you would look at things that mislead us in terms of justifying what is an ideological goal of cutting public education for 50 million American kids. You would cut 90 percent, mostly competitive grants. \$6 billion of the \$44 billion are competitive grants. K-12, special education are competitive grants.

So, to be straight with us, 90 percent cut to the Department means Title I and IDEA are on the chopping block. In terms of appropriations and the bills that are coming up right now, there is a \$4.7 billion cut to Title I. I will just say IDEA is level-funded.

There is a claim that 40 percent of the budget supports teachers. National Center for Educational Statistics shows teachers and principals are 66 percent of all school systems. That doesn't count instructional coordinators, custodians, or bus drivers. Now, this is an effort that Mr. Musk would like to cut. My colleagues have talked about the \$330 billion.

Just this last comment, Mr. Chairman: The Crossroads report. Secretary of Education Richard Riley, and I quote him, "It is disheartening to see some of the same people who worked to abolish the Department of Education using these kids of desperate, last-minute attacks to undermine our work to build effective strategies for improving student achievement."

The goal, the overall goal that is represented here in some respects, not everyone, and members of this committee and on the other side of the aisle, and what we are seeing coming forward with what happened last night is there is a deliberate attempt to cut the funding for public education in this country.

And it is where 90 percent of the students are, and it is where—and that cuts back the American Dream, and that means let's move to private education. Let's take it out of the realm of public edu-

cation and serving every single child in this country, and not those few who can get a—you know, it was Claiborne Pell, Claiborne Pell to the manor born, who said, let's give the opportunity for low-income kids, middle-income families to get their kids to school.

Some of you here would deny that opportunity, and clearly, the Republican majority in this Congress would deny that opportunity for our children.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I hope——

Mr. ADERHOLT. Yes. Obviously, everyone has a lot of strong feelings on education.

And thanks to all of our panelists for being here. Have a great afternoon, and we look forward to working with you as we work on trying to make education great again. Thanks.

[Whereupon, at 12:51 p.m., the subcommittee was adjourned.]

WEDNESDAY, MARCH 5, 2025.

MEMBERS' DAY

Mr. ADERHOLT. Good morning. The hearing will come to order.

It is a pleasure to welcome everyone to the Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human Services, and Education for Members Day. We look forward to taking testimony from Members of Congress.

This is an opportunity of course for any Member of Congress to come before our subcommittee and to draw attention to issues that are important to them, important to their districts, and of course issues that are important to our entire Nation.

I look forward to hearing from my colleagues that are here today and about the challenges they see and how this subcommittee can help them address those issues that they see as vitally important.

Before we begin, let me turn to the ranking member, Ms. DeLauro, for any comments that she would like to make.

Ms. DELAURO. Thank you so much, Mr. Chairman.

And again to my colleagues, my apologies for being late, but it is a trek from Cannon to Rayburn. It doesn't seem that long. But in any case.

But I too want to welcome you to the Labor, HHS, Education Subcommittee, which is an unbelievable committee that really does level the playing field for low-income children looking to get a good education. They equip our Nation to deal with public health emergencies. The subcommittee funds lifesaving biomedical research and helps Americans get the skills they need to be able to find a job. And the list does go on.

So these programs directly impact the lives of Americans, as you all know.

So I just want to welcome all of you here. And even as we hear from our colleagues about their top priorities for fiscal year 2026, I wish we had fiscal year 2025 finished up.

But I would also ask you—implore you really—to speak with your colleagues and help us to advocate for these programs in the unfinished fiscal year 2025 bills as well.

Thank you. I yield back.

Mr. ADERHOLT. I would like to now recognize the gentleman from Pennsylvania, Representative Glenn Thompson.

You have the floor.

WEDNESDAY, MARCH 5, 2025.

HON. GLENN THOMPSON, A REPRESENTATIVE IN CONGRESS FROM
THE STATE OF PENNSYLVANIA

Mr. THOMPSON. Chairman Aderholt, Ranking Member DeLauro, and members of the subcommittee, thank you for providing the opportunity to share my priorities for fiscal year 2026.

As co-chair of the bipartisan House Career and Technical Education Caucus, I strongly support CTE programs that provide learners of all ages with career-ready skills. As a school recently presented to me, these are the skills that help pay the bills.

From agriculture and artificial intelligence to marketing and manufacturing, CTE programs work to develop America's most valuable resource—its people. CTE is taught in a range of settings, including high schools, area technical centers, and technical and 2-year community colleges.

In total, a record number of more than 12 million high school and college students are enrolled in CTE programs nationwide today.

Congress recognized the importance of CTE when we passed the Strengthening Career and Technical Education for the 21st Century Act in 2018, which was subsequently signed into law by President Trump.

This effort, the first major Federal overhaul of CTE programs since 2006, modernized investments in CTE, helped connect educators with industry stakeholders, and continued Congress' commitment to investing in these successful programs.

CTE has established itself as a path that many high-achieving students choose in pursuit of industry certification and hands-on skills that they can use right out of high school and skills-based education programs or, quite frankly, in Congress—in college—maybe in Congress too.

In fact, the 4-year graduation rate for high school students in a career and technical education program is 96 percent, far higher than the national average.

While I am grateful that Perkins State grants were funded at \$1.44 billion in fiscal year 2024, those levels, adjusted for inflation, are roughly half of the amount of the Federal investment made in CTE in 1980 despite the record number of CTE students that currently rely on this funding.

As CTE programs evolve to meet the needs of employers in high-wage, high-skill, or in-demand career fields, we must provide strong Federal support for these successful programs.

Therefore, I respectfully urge the subcommittee to strongly support the Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education Act's State grant program in fiscal year 2026.

I would also like to discuss the importance of the Community Services Block Grant program.

Virtually every county in the United States has a Community Action Agency, a local organization charged by the Federal Government with the sweeping mission of fighting poverty.

About 1,000 such agencies exist nationwide to help ensure a safety net for low-income individuals and families. Even more importantly, they create opportunities for people to move from poverty to independence.

These agencies serve millions of low-income Americans each year, helping them gain useful skills, access new opportunities, and achieve financial independence.

The Community Services Block Grant is the only Federal program with the explicit and overarching goal of reducing poverty, regardless of its cause.

CSBG pursues its goal by providing critical funding to the nationwide network of local CAAs and supporting their locally driven, comprehensive approach to fighting poverty.

As a uniquely flexible source of funds, CSBG allows CAAs to address their communities through building partnerships, investing in the creation of opportunities especially suited to local conditions and the unique circumstances of low-income citizens.

Moreover, CSBG funds assist CAAs in attracting non-Federal resources. For every \$1 of Community Services Block Grant funding, these Community Action Agencies are able to leverage nearly \$5 from State, local, and private sources.

In 2020, Congress recognized the need to increase CSBG eligibility criteria from 100 percent to 200 percent of the Federal poverty line and has continued this policy in all subsequent appropriations laws.

This increased flexibility has enabled CAAs to stabilize fragile families, mitigate the impact of arbitrary benefit cliffs, and help working households in crisis avoid a permanent fall into poverty.

As I continue to work with my colleagues on the Education and Workforce Committee towards reauthorization and improvements within the program, I respectfully request you maintain language in this subcommittee's bill to continue eligibility at 200 percent of the Federal poverty level and provide the highest amount possible for CSBG in fiscal year 2026.

In my written testimony that has already been submitted I have also detailed support for various programs within the subcommittee's jurisdiction that bolster and improve rural healthcare. And I respectfully request your consideration of those priorities that are currently desperately needed in our rural communities.

Thank you again, Chairman Aderholt, Ranking Member DeLauro, and members of the subcommittee, for allowing me to express my priorities for fiscal year 2026. I appreciate your consideration and look forward to working together on these and other issues.

[The information follows:]

The Honorable Glenn “GT” Thompson (PA-15)
Testimony before the House Committee on Appropriations
Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human Services, Education, and Related Agencies
Member Day Hearing for FY 2026
March 5, 2025

Chairman Aderholt, Ranking Member DeLauro, and Members of the Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human Services, Education, and Related Agencies:

Thank you for providing the opportunity to share my priorities for Fiscal Year (FY) 2026. While some issues within this Subcommittee have been contentious in the past, there are many areas where we can continue to build consensus to support programs that will improve lives and shape futures. Primarily among these areas of consensus is a dedication to strengthen the workforce, provide Americans of all ages quality educational opportunities to achieve their life’s full potential, and ensure all Americans have access to high-quality, low-cost health care.

Career and Technical Education:

As Co-Chair of the bipartisan House Career and Technical Education (CTE) Caucus, I strongly support CTE programs that provide learners of all ages with career-ready skills. From agriculture and artificial intelligence to marketing and manufacturing: CTE programs work to develop America’s most valuable resource – its people.

CTE is taught in a range of settings: from high schools and area technical centers to technical and two-year community colleges. In total, a record number of more than 12 million high school and college students are enrolled in CTE programs nationwide today.

Congress recognized the importance of CTE when we passed the Strengthening Career and Technical Education for the 21st Century Act in 2018, which was subsequently signed into law by President Trump. This effort, the first major overhaul of the Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education Act (Perkins) since 2006, modernized federal investments in CTE programs, helped connect educators with industry stakeholders, and continued Congress’ commitment to investing in these successful programs.

Perkins is important for educational institutions as well as local businesses. Small business owners rely upon Perkins programs to increase the number of skilled candidates in emerging sectors. CTE has established itself as a path that many high-achieving students choose in pursuit of industry certifications and hands-on skills they can use right out of high school, in skills-based education programs, or in college. In fact, the four-year graduation rate for high school students in career and technical education programs is 96 percent – far higher than the national average.

While I am grateful that Perkins state grants were funded at \$1.44 billion in FY 2024, those levels – adjusted for inflation – are roughly half of the amount of the federal investment made in CTE in 1980 despite the record number of CTE students that currently rely on this funding. As CTE programs evolve to meet the needs of employers in high-wage, high-skill, or in-demand career fields such as skilled trades, healthcare, and information technology, we must provide strong federal support for these successful programs.

Therefore, I respectfully urge the Subcommittee to strongly support the Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education Act's state grant program in FY 2026.

Community Services Block Grant:

Virtually every county in the United States has a Community Action Agency, a local organization charged by the federal government with the sweeping mission of fighting poverty. About 1,000 such agencies exist nationwide to help ensure a safety net for low-income individuals and families. Even more important, they create opportunities for people to move from poverty to independence. For more than 60 years, CAAs have addressed local causes and conditions of poverty with input from the entire community, including the low-income people they serve. These agencies serve millions of low-income Americans each year, helping them gain useful skills, access new opportunities, and achieve financial independence.

The Community Services Block Grant (CSBG) is the only federal program with the explicit and overarching goal of reducing poverty, regardless of its cause. The CSBG pursues this goal by providing critical funding to the nationwide network of local CAAs and supporting their locally-driven comprehensive approach to fighting poverty.

As a uniquely flexible source of funds, CSBG allows CAAs to address their community needs through building partnerships and investing in the creation of opportunities especially suited to local conditions and the unique circumstances of low-income citizens. Moreover, CSBG funds assist CAAs in attracting non-federal resources; for every \$1 of federal CSBG funding, CAAs are able to leverage nearly \$5 from state, local, and private sources.

In 2020, Congress recognized the need to increase CSBG eligibility criteria from 100% (or 125% at state option) to 200% of the Federal Poverty Line (FPL) and has continued this policy in all subsequent appropriations laws. This increased flexibility has enabled CAAs to stabilize fragile families, mitigate the impact of arbitrary benefit cliffs, and help working households in crisis avoid a permanent fall into poverty.

Funds for this program help families and individuals achieve self-sufficiency, find and retain meaningful employment, attain an adequate education, make better use of available income, obtain adequate housing, and achieve greater participation in community affairs. As I continue to work with my colleagues on the Education & Workforce Committee toward a necessary reauthorization and improvements within the program, I respectfully request you maintain language in this Subcommittee's bill to continue eligibility at 200% of the FPL and provide the highest amount possible for the CSBG in FY 2026.

Rural Health

As a founding member of the Congressional Bipartisan Rural Health Caucus and having spent nearly three decades in health care prior to being elected to Congress, it is crucial that the Subcommittee support programs that seek to address the severe health care challenges that are unique to – and in many cases growing in – rural America. Unfortunately, I have seen firsthand how these challenges have manifested themselves in recent years with several rural hospitals in my district in severe financial distress and discontinuing critical services. Rural health care

programs that receive discretionary funding through this Subcommittee play a vital role in providing cost savings to our health care system and ensuring our rural communities have access to care.

Community Health Centers

Since the first health centers opened their doors more than 50 years ago, they have proven to be a worthwhile investment, providing quality and affordably primary and preventative care, dental, behavioral health, substance use disorder, pharmacy, vision, and a variety of complementary services to America's most vulnerable patients and medically underserved communities. Health centers are the medical home for over 31.5 million patients, including almost 9 million children, nearly 400,000 veterans, and thousands of my constituents. Each year, these centers save the overall health system more than \$24 billion due to reduced emergency room visits and hospitalizations. I am proud to continue to support this program and respectfully request robust funding to ensure health centers remain providers of high-quality, cost-effective primary care and can address persistent workforce challenges.

Rural Maternal and Obstetric Management Strategies (RMOMS) Program

Nearly 270 rural hospitals terminated OB services between 2011 and 2021, and many more will be lost this year. With the loss of nearly 25% of America's rural OB units, expecting mothers now face longer travel times for OB care, which increases the likelihood of worse health outcomes, especially in the event of an emergency. Following the enactment into law of the *Rural MOMS Act* in 2022, funding for the HRSA RMOMS program will help improve rural maternal health outcomes and increase accessibility through leveraging telehealth and specialty care, improving financial stability, and building networks that bolster the continuum of care.

Rural Residency Planning and Development (RRPD) Program

Since 2019, HRSA's RRPD Program has created 39 new accredited rural residency programs or rural track programs in family medicine, internal medicine, psychiatry, and general surgery and received approval for approximately 521 new residency positions in rural areas. Data show that residents are five times more likely to practice in a rural setting if they train in one, and rural health care facilities face persistent challenges with workforce recruitment and retention.

Rural Communities Opioid Response Program (RCORP)

The opioid and mental health crisis has hit rural communities in Pennsylvania particularly hard. RCORP is a multi-year initiative that addresses barriers to treatment for substance use disorders and funds rural communities in planning and implementation efforts related.

We must ensure that Americans living in rural and remote areas can access quality, affordable health care and mental health services. Therefore, I request robust support for all of these programs listed above.

Thank you again Chairman Aderholt, Ranking Member DeLauro, and Members of this Subcommittee for allowing me to express my priorities for FY 2026. I appreciate your consideration and look forward to working together on these and other issues.

Mr. ADERHOLT. Thank you very much. Thank you. And we will include anything you want to add into the record. And glad to have you here.

Next we will recognize—

Ms. DELAURO. Mr. Chairman, can I just make one comment?

Mr. ADERHOLT. Yes.

Ms. DELAURO. The programs you talk about are critical, a career in technical education. And we did a hearing early on where it mentioned the focus was about the great outcomes with the technical education and what it does.

I would just want you to be mindful of this. You know and I know there really is this move to attack education, dismantle the Department of Education.

One can view things that are wrong and address them and so forth, but I think the Department of Education really has to be central to our ability to provide the kinds of resources that you so deeply care about with CTE.

And again, just be mindful as the debate goes on and on and where we are in terms of the overall appropriations process and making sure that this is a program that does not fall by the way-side or get underfunded for some reasons.

The Community Services Block Grant, everyone knows about its benefits as well. And so we have yet to see whether or not that will be a target of any cuts.

Mr. THOMPSON. Yeah, both programs, Ranking Member, I believe are forces for good. Quite frankly, career and technical education, I shared with youth graduation rate of students enrolled in career and technical education is 96 percent, far above the general high school completion rate for the remainder of the students.

One of the things I did mention in my testimony—and I don't think it is in the written testimony either—is that today, as a result of that 2018 Modernizing Career and Technical Education for the 21st Century, I was very proud to stand in the Oval Office when it was signed into—that was my legislation signed into law.

We now, where we had underutilized programs in the past, programs that ended because they didn't have enough students, universally across the board today we have waiting lists. And that is something I would certainly respectfully request the subcommittee take into consideration as well, that there are students that are looking for those great opportunities.

And not just youth. I mean, a lot of our career and technical education programs run dual track. So appreciate it.

Ms. DELAURO. It works, it works. Thank you.

Mr. ADERHOLT. Okay, thank you, thank you so much. All right.

Next we have Congressman Seth Magaziner from the great State of Rhode Island.

Welcome. And you have the floor.

WEDNESDAY, MARCH 5, 2025.

**HON. SETH MAGAZINER, A REPRESENTATIVE IN CONGRESS FROM
THE STATE OF RHODE ISLAND**

Mr. MAGAZINER. Chairman Aderholt, Ranking Member DeLauro, and members of the committee, thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today.

I am here today to advocate for two programs that are absolutely essential in building a competitive workforce and providing opportunity to the next generation of talented young Americans.

Federal Pell grants—named after former Rhode Island Senator Claiborne Pell, who created them—have opened the door to higher education for millions of low- and middle-income students.

No young person who has the grades, the work ethic, and the ambition to go to college should be denied that opportunity just because their parents don't make a lot of money. And if we are going to compete with China and the rest of the world in the global economy, we need a workforce with 21st century skills.

Approximately 6 million students received Pell grants in the 2023 to 2024 school year and a majority of those grants went to students whose families make less than \$20,000 a year. However, the value of the Pell grant is not keeping up with the rising cost of tuition and cost of living.

Today, Pell grants cover less than one-third of the average cost of attendance at a public 4-year university. They used to cover 80 percent. In fact, the maximum Pell grant amount has only been increased by about \$1,600 over the last decade.

Last year I led 126 of our colleagues in calling for the Pell grant to be doubled and indexed to inflation, and I plan to do so again this year.

Restoring the Pell grant's purchasing power will not only make college more affordable, but also improve outcomes by providing grant recipients more opportunity to focus on school by covering their basic needs.

We must increase funding for the Pell grant so that the next generation of Americans has access to the education they deserve.

I also urge this committee to increase funding for career and technical education innovation and modernization grants. As we have heard, there is more than one path to success in this country and we need to support a range of different education and job training opportunities, including for those kids who are eager to enter the job market or who may not want to attend 4-year college.

Career and technical education can prepare young people for good-paying jobs in a range of growing fields, like healthcare, manufacturing, and the skilled trades.

And students want these programs. In Rhode Island, my State, career and technical education programs have been so successful that the demand is larger than the number of spots available. More than half of Rhode Island public high school students are participating—more than half of high school students in my State are in CTE programs.

Innovation and modernization grants fund research and pilot programs to ensure that career and technical education programs are keeping up with labor market needs. They also identify, support, and evaluate evidence-based strategies to improve the effectiveness of career and technical education.

The needs of employers are constantly changing, and we need to ensure that career and technical education programs are adapting

to meet those needs so that students know there is a good job waiting for them when they finish their program.

Last year, I led 31 of our colleagues in sending this committee a letter in support of \$64,000,000 for CTE innovation and modernization grants, and I look forward to doing the same again this year.

I am glad that career and technical education has historically had robust bipartisan support in the House, and I am optimistic that we can continue to work together on this important bipartisan issue.

Finally, we must acknowledge that last week the House passed a budget plan that directs the Education and Workforce Committee to make cuts of at least \$330 billion in order to pay for tax cuts that will largely benefit the rich. And President Trump has repeatedly stated his intention to eliminate the Department of Education.

We cannot sell out America's students and employers by gutting education and job training. I ask my colleagues to take education off the chopping block and instead invest in providing opportunities to the next generation, including through expanding Pell grants and career and technical education.

I thank you for your consideration. And I yield back.

[The information follows:]

To: Rep. Seth Magaziner
From: Kyra
CC: Emily, Noah, Jess
RE: FINAL Remarks for Appropriations LHHS Member Day Hearing
Date: 3/3/2025

☒ Noah

☒ Emily

☒ Jess

[Introduction]

- Chair Aderholt, Ranking Member DeLauro, and members of the Committee - Thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today.
- I am here today to advocate for two programs that are absolutely essential in building a competitive workforce and providing opportunity to the next generation of talented young Americans..

[Pell Grant]

- Federal Pell Grants – named after former Rhode Island Senator Clairborne Pell who created them – have opened the door to higher education for millions of low- and middle- income students to access higher education.
- No young person who has the grades, the work ethic and the ambition to go to college, should be denied the opportunity just because their parents don't make a lot of money.

- And if we are going to compete with China and the rest of the world in the global economy, we need a workforce with 21st century skills.
- Approximately 6 million students received Pell Grants in the 2023-2024 school year, and the majority of those grants went to students whose families make less than \$20,000 per year.
- However, the value of the Pell Grant is not keeping up with the rising cost of tuition and cost of living.
- Today, Pell Grants cover less than one-third the average cost of attendance at a public four-year university - they used to cover around 80%.
- In fact, the maximum Pell grant amount has only been increased by \$1,665 over the last decade.
- Last year I led 126 of our colleagues in calling for the Pell grant to be doubled and indexed to inflation, and I plan to do so again this year
- Restoring the Pell Grant's purchasing power will not only make college more affordable, but improve outcomes by providing grant recipients more opportunity to focus on school by covering their basic needs.

- We must increase funding for the Pell Grant so that the next generation of Americans has access to the education they deserve.

[CTE]

- I also urge this committee to increase funding for Career and Technical Education Innovation and Modernization grants.
- There is more than one path to success in this county, and we need to support a range of different education and job training opportunities, including for those kids who are eager to enter the job market, or who may not want to attend four-year college.
- Career and Technical Education can prepare young people for good paying jobs in a range of growing fields, like health care, manufacturing, and the skilled trades.
- Students want these programs.
 - In Rhode Island, career and technical education programs have been so successful that the demand is larger than the number of spots available.
 - More than half of Rhode Island public high school students are participating.

- Innovation and Modernization grants fund research and pilot programs to ensure that career and technical education programs are keeping up with labor market needs.
- They also identify, support, and evaluate evidence-based strategies and activities to improve Career and Technical Education.
 - For example, the Career-Connected High Schools initiative gives students opportunities for hands-on learning, real-life work experience, and opportunities to make progress towards industry credentials or college credits while they are still in high school.
- The needs of employers are constantly changing, and we need to ensure that Career and Technical Education programs are constantly adapting to meet those needs, so that students know that there is a good job likely to be waiting for them when they finish their program.
- Last year I led 31 of my colleagues in sending this committee a letter in support of \$64.4 million for CTE Innovation and Modernization grants, and I look forward to doing so again this year.

- I am glad that career and technical education has historically had robust support in the House of Representatives, and I am optimistic that we can continue to work together on this important bipartisan issue.

[Conclusion]

- Finally, we must acknowledge that just last week, House Republicans passed a budget bill that directs the Education and Workforce Committee to make cuts of at least \$330 billion in order to pay for tax cuts that will disproportionately benefit the rich.
- And President Trump has repeatedly stated his intentions to dismantle the Department of Education.
- We cannot sell out America's students and employers by gutting education and job training.
- I ask my colleagues to take education off of the chopping block, and instead invest in providing opportunities to the next generation, including through expanding Pell Grants and Career and Technical Education.
- Thank you for your consideration, and I yield back.

Mr. ELLZEY [presiding]. Thank you, Mr. Magaziner.
Ranking Member.

Ms. DELAURO. Just to say thank you very, very much. We should be increasing the amount of Pell grants.

Just to say about Claiborne Pell, who I did get to know, Claiborne Pell was a Senator to the manor born. He was from a very affluent family. But he recognized that there was a need to be able to provide an educational opportunity to working-class families, middle-class families, lower-income families. Thereby, we have the Pell grant.

We should continue it, we should increase it, and make the opportunity for kids to be able to reach and reach their dreams and their aspirations.

You talked about the career and technical, which we talked about earlier. And I think it is worthwhile noting that education needs to come off of the chopping block. Education is the great equalizer, as Horace Mann said, and we need to provide resources to make sure that people have the educational opportunities for their success.

Thank you for your testimony.

Mr. MAGAZINER. Thank you.

Mr. ELLZEY. Thank you, Ranking Member.

I would like to thank all the students who took an interest in your Federal Government today. And thanks for what you are doing to enter the workforce.

I know a little place just south of Dallas that has got a high quality of living and a low cost of living that you are welcome to come to, and a lot of manufacturing jobs in any number of places, any number of industries that you might seek to work.

So come on down to Ellis County and Midlothian and Dallas. We would be happy to have you all down there. But thank you for expressing interest.

Mr. Magaziner, thank you for coming today.

Seeing no other testimony today, hearing is adjourned.

[Whereupon, at 11:00 a.m., the subcommittee was adjourned.]

House Appropriations Committee
Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human Services, Education and Related Agencies
FY2026 Member Day Testimony for the Hearing Record
Submitted by Representative Mariannette Miller-Meeks (IA-01)

My experiences serving as a physician, state Public Health Director, and military servicewoman have shown me firsthand the importance of having a strong infectious diseases (ID) health care workforce in every community to protect patient safety, enable modern medical advances, prepare for and respond to outbreaks with local needs in mind, and support our military readiness and national security. Unfortunately, nearly 80% of US counties do not have a single ID physician and recruitment is dwindling, as only 51% of ID physician training programs filled last year while most other specialties were able to fill 90% or more of their programs. Similar shortages persist among other ID and bio-preparedness health professionals, including clinical laboratory staff, ID pharmacists, infection preventionists, and ID nurses. That is why I am urging the Subcommittee to include funding for the Bio-Preparedness Workforce Pilot Program in its FY2026 bill to incentivize individuals to pursue careers in ID and to work in the communities with the greatest need, including our rural areas.

I am proud to be leading a bipartisan effort with my colleagues to request \$50 million for this Pilot Program, though we recognize that this Subcommittee has to balance many important funding priorities with the need to be fiscally responsible. As such, I would be grateful for any funding the Subcommittee can allocate to this important program.

Importance of ID Workforce in Patient Safety and Modern Medicine

Because so many chronic conditions like diabetes and heart disease increase the risk and severity of infections, and procedures including cancer chemotherapy, organ transplants, surgeries, carry a risk of infection, ID is uniquely connected to nearly every aspect of health care and essential for the safe provision of many types of health care. ID experts lead infection prevention and control programs in health care facilities as well as antimicrobial stewardship programs to help ensure patients with serious infections receive the right treatments and to protect our antimicrobials from the development of antimicrobial resistance. Patients with serious infections who are seen by an ID physician have better outcomes, shorter hospital stays and lower Medicare costs.

Importance of ID Workforce in Outbreak and Pandemic Preparedness and Response

As a co-chair of the Pandemic Preparedness Caucus, I know that we need to apply lessons learned from previous outbreaks and other emergencies to ensure we are better prepared for the future. That includes having a local expert workforce that can meet local needs, reducing reliance on the federal government. During an outbreak or pandemic, local ID experts are needed to scale up testing, care for patients, partner with local public health on investigations, enroll patients in clinical trials, develop protocols at their local health care facilities to manage influxes of patients, and maintain ongoing patient care while helping to educate the local community.

Last year, I was pleased to have the opportunity to see the University of Iowa Hospitals and Clinics level three infectious diseases intensive care unit, also known as a bio-containment unit or special pathogens unit, to enable a safe and rapid expert response. This unit supports not only our state, but many other states in the Midwest that do not have their own special pathogens unit. In areas like ours that have a lot of agricultural business, it is particularly important that we be prepared to respond to avian flu and other potential zoonotic infectious diseases outbreaks that may impact our agricultural workers. These special pathogens units require highly trained ID and bio-preparedness staff who are becoming increasingly difficult to recruit.

Importance of ID Workforce in Military Readiness and National Security

Serious infections also hinder our military readiness. Military servicepeople stationed across the globe are often exposed to pathogens not endemic in the U.S. In addition, combat wounds and burns can easily become infected. When serving abroad, and when veterans return home, they must have access to ID care to prevent, diagnose, and treat serious infections.

ID Workforce Shortages and Recruitment Challenges

Despite the essential nature of our ID and bio-preparedness workforce, shortages and recruitment challenges persist. In my state of Iowa, only 11 counties have an ID physician and 93% of counties have fewer than two ID physicians per 100,000 residents. Each year, the University of Iowa aims to recruit three new ID physician trainees, but in 2024, could only recruit two, a phenomenon typical across the country. Most other specialties regularly fill their training programs, but ID faces a unique challenge. According to Medscape, ID is the 3rd lowest paid medical specialty. High medical student debt understandably drives many new physicians to higher paying specialties, leaving our patients and communities without the ID experts they need.

Request: Fund the Bio-Preparedness Workforce Pilot Program

The Bio-Preparedness Workforce Pilot was authorized by the Consolidated Appropriation Act of 2023 as a demonstration project as a part of the *PREVENT Pandemics Act*. Despite the deep gaps in the ID workforce, no federal programs offered loan repayment for providing ID care or conducting emergency preparedness activities in health care facilities prior to the establishment of the Pilot. This program fills a discreet but critical need without duplication of federal resources.

\$50 million for the pilot program will provide up to \$50,000 in loan repayment to as many as 1,000 infectious diseases professionals, including ID trainees and early career ID health professionals in Iowa. To be eligible, health care professionals (e.g. physicians, nurse practitioners, physician assistants, pharmacists, infection preventionists, and clinical laboratory personnel) must meet all three of the following criteria:

- ID or bio-preparedness expertise.
- Students in the final semester of completing a health professions degree or certificate program at an accredited institution of higher education and to health care professionals who have completed their training within the preceding 10 years.

- Health care professionals who work in a health professional shortage area, federal health facility such as a Veterans Affairs hospital or clinic, a federally funded health facility such as a community health center, a health facility operated by a tribal organization or another relevant entity determined by the HHS secretary.

Thank you for considering this vital request.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Mariannette J. Miller-Meeks". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Mariannette Miller-Meeks, M.D.
Member of Congress

Congresswoman Gwen Moore Testimony for the Record**LHHSE Subcommittee Member Day Hearing**

- Thank you, Mr./Madam Chair.
- As a proud granddaughter, daughter, and mother of public educators, I am so glad to be here today to discuss the importance of federal support for our public education system.
- Education impacts virtually every aspect of American life and is vital to our nation's economic competitiveness and growth.
- The need for sufficient reading and math comprehension skills is ingrained in everyday life, whether it's shopping at the grocery store, paying bills, applying for a loan, using public transportation, etc.
- These skills are developed through participation in a robust public education system that is equipped with the tools necessary to support students from pre-K to high school graduation.
- Which is why for decades, Congress has enacted numerous critical education laws such as the IDEA and the Higher Education, because of the recognition of the federal interest in education and this Committee has funded these laws.
- While education is primarily the responsibility of the state and local education agencies, the U.S. Department of Education plays an important role in ensuring equity in education, especially at the K-12 level. It is critical that we protect that role and reject schemes to "reorganize" or dismantle this Department. I hope this Committee will exercise its jurisdiction and reject any efforts to "reorganize" or dismantle this Department unilaterally.
- To provide all children, regardless of their socioeconomic status, with the opportunity to receive a free and high-quality education, Congress passed the Elementary and Secondary Education Act.
- This law established Title I grants, which provide supplemental assistance to school districts with high poverty rates. These funds can be used to further programs aimed at closing achievement gaps, helping students meet state achievement standards, etc. This Committee on a bipartisan basis has funded those grants.

- Federal support is also critical to the education of students with disabilities, as highlighted by the passage of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) in 1975.
- IDEA grants are crucial for providing early intervention for infants, toddlers, and preschool-aged children, which has been proven to improve educational outcomes, and funding special education services at the K-12 level, which provides a specialized learning environment for children with disabilities.
- To put the impact of these grants into perspective, in the 2017-2018 school year, approximately 7 million children nationwide, between the ages of 3 and 21, received educational services supported by the federal government.¹
- While we have fallen short of the authorization goals set by Congress, this Committee, on a bipartisan basis, has a long history of funding IDEA.
- Federal support also plays a pivotal role in the accessibility, efficacy, and affordability of higher education, which includes undergraduate and postgraduate degrees at a college or university, associate's degrees at a community college, vocational or technical certificates and diplomas, etc.
- One program that uses federal funding to change the lives of its participants is TRIO. The Federal TRIO Programs are outreach and student services programs designed to identify and provide services for individuals from disadvantaged backgrounds.
- TRIO includes eight programs targeted at serving and assist low-income individuals, first-generation college students, and individuals with disabilities to progress through the academic pipeline from middle school to postbaccalaureate programs.
- These programs include professional mentorship, academic tutoring, career counseling, financial literacy support, help to secure housing for youth facing homelessness, and much, much more.
- Over 870,000 students across the nation benefit from TRIO programs, many of whom credit TRIO with helping them earn their college degree and secure a job after graduation.²
- I myself am a TRIO alum, and I know firsthand just how these crucial programs can change the trajectory of a person's life. And so do the Republican and Democratic members of the over 100 Member Strong bipartisan Congressional TRIO Caucus.

¹ <https://crs.gov/Reports/R44624?source=search>

² [2023_COETRIO_BY_STATE_022124.pdf](#)

- Other programs that depend on full and robust federal support are the Pell Grant program, which ensured that 6 million low-income students in the 2021-2022 school year could attend college, and Career and Technical Education programs that provide career-oriented technical training to over 12 million students.
- The funding that this Committee has put into our education system, both K-12 and post-secondary, comes back to us in dividends. We need to continue that support and investment, not dismantle the Department of Education.
- Education is still the great equalizer - adults with higher educational attainment live healthier and longer lives³ and households with higher levels of education tend to have more liquid assets, diversify their savings, and maintain low levels of debt relative to assets.⁴
- A strong education system and an educated population contribute to a healthy populace and a thriving economy, all of which can only be achieved through solid federal funding and support.
- I urge this Committee to continue to invest in these programs, through the Department of Education, in the FY 2026 funding cycle and to include language in any appropriations bill to block efforts to unilaterally dismantle or “reorganize” the Department of Education without Congressional oversight.
- Thank you, I yield back.

³ [The relationship between education and health: reducing disparities through a contextual approach - PMC](#)

⁴ [Education Income And Wealth | St. Louis Fed](#)

Rep. Lloyd Doggett

Member of Congress, TX-37

Dear Chairman Aderholt, Ranking Member DeLauro, and Members of the Subcommittee,

I appreciate the opportunity to submit testimony in strong support of increased federal funding for the National Domestic Violence Hotline (The Hotline), a life-saving public safety resource that serves as the first point of contact for victims, survivors, and their loved ones impacted by domestic violence. The Hotline, supported through the Labor, Health and Human Services, Education, and Related Agencies appropriations bill, ensures that individuals facing domestic violence and dating abuse have immediate access to 24/7, confidential, trauma-informed support via phone, chat, and text services.

Since taking its first call in 1996, The Hotline, based in Austin, TX, has answered over 7.5 million calls, texts, and chats nationally. In Texas alone, in 2024, more than 26,000 people relied on The Hotline for support in seeking safety. For many victims, this is the first call they make when seeking safety, guidance, and/or immediate services for an abusive situation. It is also a critical tool for law enforcement, counselors, family members, friends, and others to help those experiencing violence and abuse. Unfortunately, rising demand for The Hotline's services is outpacing resources and we must do more to ensure that more calls are answered.

Domestic violence is a public safety crisis that affects every community in America, straining law enforcement agencies, courts, health care providers, and social services. Millions of

individuals experience domestic violence each year and millions of children also suffer the effects. Domestic violence-related homicides have been rising nationwide, with Texas ranking among one of the highest in the country. Just last year, Texas domestic violence programs reported turning away thousands of victims and survivors due to lack of resources, leaving many with nowhere to turn. A fully funded National Domestic Violence Hotline ensures survivors can safely plan and receive support and services they need from highly trained advocates, reducing burdens on emergency responders and the justice system while strengthening public safety.

The demand for The Hotline's services continues to surge at an unprecedented rate. In FY 2024 alone, The Hotline answered 444,178 contacts, with more than 3,000 calls, chats, and texts received each day, more than double the rate of just a few years ago. Without additional funding, The Hotline will be unable to keep pace with this increase, leaving thousands of survivors without access to life-saving assistance and support.

Many survivors turn to both national resources like The Hotline and local domestic violence service providers. When local programs are overburdened, The Hotline helps fill this gap, ensuring that survivors have 24/7 options, especially in rural areas where shelter space and programs are limited or already stretched too thin. Many programs and states also rely on The Hotline when they experience their own limited staffing, weather crises, or funding shortfalls, and regularly roll their helplines to The Hotline.

Supporting The Hotline is not just about assisting victims, it is about reducing crime, protecting families, and strengthening communities. By ensuring victims and survivors have access to crisis

intervention and resources, we can lower domestic violence-related homicides and violent crime rates, ease the burden on courts and emergency services, and promote financial independence for survivors, reducing reliance on public assistance programs.

The economic cost of domestic violence, including medical expenses, lost productivity, and law enforcement costs exceeds \$3.6 trillion over a lifetime. Investing in services like The Hotline is a fiscally responsible way to reduce these long-term costs while saving lives. To meet the growing demand for services and ensure every victim and survivor's call for help is answered, I respectfully request that the Subcommittee provide \$30 million in FY 2026 funding for the National Domestic Violence Hotline.

This funding will allow The Hotline to increase capacity, expand services to meet survivors' urgent needs, enhance prevention and intervention programs, and ensure that every survivor seeking help can receive it.

I appreciate the Subcommittee's longstanding, bipartisan commitment to addressing domestic violence and supporting victims and survivors. I urge you to prioritize robust funding for The Hotline so that no survivor's call for help goes unanswered. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Lloyd Doggett

Member of Congress, TX-37

Chairman Aderholt, Ranking Member DeLauro, and Members of the Committee, thank you for holding this Member Day hearing and providing me the opportunity to share the concerns of my constituents and community. As you manage the critical task of building the Labor, Health and Human Services, Education and related agencies appropriations bill I want to share specific programs that would benefit from continued funding.

First, I want to address the topic of child care affordability and accessibility, and the critical importance of the Child Care and Development Block Grant (CCDBG). Access to safe and stable child care is necessary for working parents, and the growing costs are increasingly making it unavailable for working families across Pennsylvania and across the country. The CCDBG provides federal funding for states to provide child care subsidies to meet the needs of the community and supports working parents ability to afford quality child care. Congress has made bipartisan investments in CCDBG, and should continue to increase investment in this program to ensure our economy and workforce remain strong. Insufficient access to child care remains a driving barrier to workforce participation. The CCDBG helps working families across our nation continue their work, while ensuring our kids have the best path for success in their development.

I would also like to highlight the importance of the Preschool Development Grants Birth through Five (PDG B-5). This grant program supports states' ability to build the necessary infrastructure for early learning programs and child care. This program is incredibly impactful in efforts of recruitment and retention for the early educator workforce. Without the qualified early educators, efforts to increase accessibility for working families will be in vain. Continued support of this program will guarantee that families will have access to child care, and assist in strengthening local economies.

The more you invest in a child in their formative years, the more likely they are to have better outcomes in health, education, and workforce contribution. These early childhood education programs are essential to not only supporting our modern workforce, but developing our future leaders. I would also like to submit for the record testimony from Sarah Rittling, Executive Director of the First Five Years Fund, which emphasizes the impact of CCDBG, Head Start, PDG B-5, IDEA, and CCAMPIS for review.

Thank you for this opportunity to testify. I look forward to continuing to work with the Committee and all my colleagues on supporting these crucial programs.



March 5, 2025

Chairman Aderholt, Ranking Member DeLauro, and members of the Subcommittee,

My name is Sarah Rittling and I have the honor of serving as the Executive Director of the First Five Years Fund.

Quality child care plays a critical role in our nation, supporting the well-being of working families and strengthening our national economy. Two-thirds of children ages five and under in our country require child care because all their available parents are working. Parents should be able to make care choices that best support their family's individual needs and their child's development, yet too many are left with very few options and struggle to afford the care they do find. We appreciate the support you've shown to date.

Investments in federal child care programs are crucial. Today, I respectfully request consideration of the following necessary funding increases to help meet the pressing needs of America's families and secure a stronger economic future for our children and our nation. Together, these programs knit together to provide the basis of support for where children go prior to Kindergarten and while many of their parents work.

- **Child Care and Development Block Grant (CCDBG)** – At least an additional \$3.65 billion for CCDBG (a total of at least \$12.4 billion).
- **Head Start** – An additional \$1.94 billion for Head Start (a total of at least \$14.91 billion).
- **Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) Part C and Part B, Section 619** – An additional \$690 million for early intervention services provided under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) Part C (a total of \$1.23 billion) and \$409.7 million for preschool special education services under Part B, Section 619 (a total of \$829.7 million).
- As well as robust funding for **Preschool Development Grants Birth through Five (PDG B-5)** and **Child Care Access Means Parents in School (CCAMPIS)**

The high cost and low availability of child care forces too many families to make tough decisions. Some parents may have to put their careers on hold. Many go into debt or take on considerable financial strain.

And child care challenges do not only affect families — they have become a leading concern among employers, particularly small businesses who are increasingly eager to be part of the solution. Many employers report that inadequate child care options directly impact their ability to recruit and retain employees. This has serious repercussions on daily productivity and ultimately affects their bottom lines and costs our national economy billions of dollars in lost revenue, earnings, and productivity every year.

Quality child care is both pro-work and pro-family, and Congress plays a key role in addressing these realities to give families a wider range of options to meet their child care needs. Federal programs benefit families in all fifty states and every single Congressional district. Even with the growing support from committed governors, local elected officials, businesses, and philanthropy, the federal government

provides the vast majority of public funding for the extremely complicated child care system we have in this country. But, today, these programs still only reach a fraction of the families in your district who are eligible and need child care. Here are a few details about how these programs work together to support young children, their families, and their community.

- **Child Care and Development Block Grant (CCDBG)** has shared broad bipartisan support, including from President Trump in his previous term. The program helps parents work while their children receive quality care. States partner with the federal government on how to use these funds to best meet the needs of children, parents, and child care providers in their communities. Expanding federal investments in CCDBG would support states in making targeted investments to their child care systems aligned with longer-term needs. In almost all states, the Child Care and Development Block Grant (CCDBG) is only sufficient to reach less than 15% of eligible children. Additional funding will allow states to provide more families with vouchers, support and retain the child care workforce, and increase access, and options for parents.
- **Head Start and Early Head Start** deliver comprehensive early learning, health, nutrition, and family support services to families and children from birth to age five who are most in need of support. These programs customize services and program models based on the needs of families in their specific communities, an approach that allows many programs to combine Head Start funding with other federal and state funds for pre-K, child care, or other early care and education services to maximize their impact. This investment is necessary to ensure families and children in every congressional district are able to thrive.
- In a nutshell, with **Preschool Development Grants Birth-5**, the federal government supports states' ability to build an effective early learning infrastructure. It's about strategy; states use this funding to increase the quality and efficiency of existing early learning programs and systems, while thinking strategically about how to optimize federal and state funding streams.
- The **Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) Part C and Part B, Section 619** ensures states and public agencies can provide early intervention, special education, and other related services to more than 7 million eligible children and youth with disabilities across the country, including infants and toddlers. Federal investments in both the IDEA Part C infant and toddler program and Part B, Section 619 preschool program have been unable to meet the increased number of children needing to be served, as well as the cost of inflation.
- **Child Care Access Means Parents in School (CCAMPIS)** helps low-income student parents enrolled in higher education access child care by providing child care services through students' own institution, by contracting with community partners, or by offering subsidies so parents can choose the child care provider that best meets their needs. More than 20% of all undergraduate students are raising children, but at current funding and award levels, the program is only able to support a very small fraction of the student parents who rely on child care to succeed in school.

Making child care more affordable and accessible for families with little ones not only provides young children with vital opportunities to learn and grow, it also strengthens family finances, supports a thriving workforce, and boosts the economy. This Subcommittee has historically been incredibly supportive, and I appreciate the opportunity to testify today on behalf of additional investments in our federal early learning and child care programs. We stand ready to assist in any way.

####

Sarah Rittling

Executive Director, First Five Years Fund
srittling@ffyf.org

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20510

March 14, 2025

The Honorable Robert Aderholt
 Chair
 House Appropriations Subcommittee on
 Labor, Health and Human Services,
 Education, and Related Agencies
 272 Cannon House Office Building
 Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Rosa DeLauro
 Ranking Member
 House Appropriations Subcommittee on
 Labor, Health and Human Services,
 Education, and Related Agencies
 2413 Rayburn House Office Building
 Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chair Aderholt and Ranking Member DeLauro:

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony to the Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human Services, Education and Related Agencies. I look forward to working on legislation to support the vital programs in this forthcoming bill.

Child Sexual Abuse Prevention

Children are among our most vulnerable and susceptible to abuse. Adverse childhood experiences – such as child sexual abuse – can impact how children think, feel, and act over their lifetime. For example, child sexual abuse is associated with long-term physical and mental health issues. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) estimates that 1 in 4 girls and 1 in 13 boys will become victims of child sexual abuse. A 2018 study estimated that the lifetime economic burden of child sexual abuse in the United States was at least \$9.3 billion in 2015; however, because sexual abuse committed against children is underreported, this is likely an underestimate.

Increased investment in prevention activities at the Injury Center will help to ensure the responsibility to stop or report abuse does not rest with children. Despite the wide-ranging impact of child sexual abuse, there are currently very few scientifically validated prevention interventions. In order to successfully combat child sexual abuse, additional resources to provide evidence-based, proactive intervention remain crucial. In the absence of validated prevention efforts, organizations and individuals that work with children developed and implemented idiosyncratic and untested prevention efforts.

In Fiscal Year 2024, \$3 million was included for Child Sexual Abuse Prevention, consistent with Fiscal Year 2023 funding. We must take continued action to combat this issue on a large-scale and ensure the health and safety of children who remain at risk of experiencing sexual abuse. While this issue is largely preventable, regrettably, there are substantial gaps in proactively keeping children from harm. A CDC report on the current state of child sexual abuse prevention outline several serious yet addressable gaps in existing research efforts, including:

- Inadequate information on the scope of child sexual abuse victimization and perpetration. Prevalence estimates provide essential information about where, when, and whom prevention efforts should target, yet there are currently no high-quality perpetration prevalence estimates in the US or elsewhere.

- Incomplete understanding of factors that lead to child sexual abuse perpetration. Studies that follow large samples of at-risk individuals over time are needed to identify risk factors that promote offending, as well as protective factors that inhibit offending.
- Absence of validated prevention strategies. There is an unmet need to develop, validate, and disseminate effective prevention programs and to ensure that evidence-based interventions make it into the hands of parents, educators, youth-serving organizations, and other stakeholders dedicated to keeping children safe from sexual abuse.

Worker Protections

The Department of Labor oversees the implementation of critical programs affecting our nation's workforce, such as training and education programs, developing regulations, carrying out enforcement and compliance activities, and providing guidance to industries and workers alike.

For example, the Occupational Health and Safety Administration (OSHA) plays a fundamental role in protecting our workforce through enforcing, regulating, and implementing health and safety standards. Every day, workers rely on OSHA to ensure they make it home safely and mitigate occupational risk factors associated with chronic illness.

Since 1971, OSHA standards have made workplaces safer. Health and occupational hazards are present in several industries, such as construction, health care, and agriculture for example. Whether it be fall protection, machinery and machine guarding, or hazard communication, OSHA activities – including agency standards, education, and training – are vitally important. Our nation relies on its workers, and we must continue to implement the proper safeguards to ensure they are not exposed to unregulated hazards on the job.

Additionally, more than ever, we must increase investment in the National Labor Relations Board (NLRB), which is essential to enforcing federal labor law. The rulings from the Board impact the ability of workers and employers to negotiate and create better workplace environments. The NLRB has been functioning with inadequate staffing, leaving regional field offices to manage increased caseloads. These delays in obtaining resolution for unfair labor practice claims particularly hinders the collective bargaining process.

Further, union activity has increased significantly in recent years, and NLRB resources must reflect the additional need. According to the Economic Policy Institute, union election petitions submitted to the NLRB have more than doubled since 2021. Additionally, in 2024, 16 million workers had union representation. Funding the NLRB to its full staffing capacity is imperative to ensuring a fair union election process.

The collective bargaining process encourages employers and employees to come together and create a better workplace. The National Labor Relations Act was a historic step in protecting the right of workers to organize for fair wages and benefits. To be effective, the statute relies on the NLRB's ability to, among other essential activities, investigate, decide cases, and enforce decisions. Our continued investment in the agency is not only essential – it is in the best interests of our workforce and economy.

I thank the Subcommittee for your continued support on these important issues. As we begin to deliberate and debate the federal budget for Fiscal Year 2026, I am hopeful that we can find bipartisan solutions to meet the pressing needs of our communities.

Sincerely,



Frank J. Mrvan
Member of Congress

**Congresswoman Sheila Cherfilus-McCormick (D-FL-20) Written Testimony
for the House Appropriations Labor, Health and Human Services, Education,
and Related Agencies Subcommittee**

Dear Chairman Cole, Chairman Aderholt, and Ranking Member DeLauro:

I am grateful for the opportunity to provide written testimony to the House Appropriations Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human Services, Education, and Related Agencies (LHHS) on Fiscal Year (FY) 2026 appropriations.

On January 2, 2023, during a pivotal Week 17 NFL game, America watched Buffalo Bills Safety Damar Hamlin collapse on the field after suffering from a sudden cardiac event. Thanks to the heroic actions by the Bills' medical staff, Hamlin was able to receive life-saving cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR) and have his heartbeat restored. If it were not for the decisive efforts of these well-trained men and women, Hamlin would not be alive today.

Unfortunately, many Americans are not so lucky.

Approximately 350,000 people in the U.S. suffer from sudden cardiac arrest outside the hospital each year, including 2,000 seemingly healthy people under the age of 25.¹² In fact, sudden cardiac arrest is the leading cause of exercise-related death in young competitive athletes.³ 1 in 300 youth have an undetected heart condition that puts them at risk of an adverse event.⁴

Despite the prevalence of sudden cardiac events among our nation's youth, many schools lack the proper equipment and trained staff to respond to sudden cardiac arrests in students. Thanks to the leadership of Damar Hamlin, the NFL, the American Heart Association, and Representatives Pallone and Posey, we were able to get the *Access to AEDs Act* included in the *HEARTS Act*, which was signed into law by President Biden in December.

This bill authorizes a grant program to support the purchase of automated external defibrillators (AEDs), promote CPR and AED training programs, and enable the development of emergency cardiac arrest response plans in K-12 schools. With funding for this program, Congress can lower the mortality rate for out-of-hospital cardiac arrests, which currently stands at 90 percent.

¹ National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute, "Out-of-hospital cardiac arrest: NHLBI studies tackle deadly public health problem," February 10, 2025, accessible at <https://www.nhlbi.nih.gov/news/2023/out-hospital-cardiac-arrest-nhlbi-studies-tackle-deadly-public-health-problem#:~:text=Out%2Dof%2Dhospital%20cardiac%20arrest%20claims%20the%20lives%20of%20nearly,what%20it%20was%20in%202000>

² University of Michigan, Department of Pediatrics, David Bradley, M.D., "Sudden cardiac arrest in young athletes: 5 things parents should know," March 7, 2024, accessible at <https://medicine.umich.edu/dept/pediatrics/news/archive/202403/sudden-cardiac-arrest-young-athletes-5-things-parents-should-know#:~:text=About%20%2C000%20young%2C%20seemingly%20healthy,for%20Disease%20Control%20and%20Prevention>.

³ Mayo Clinic, "Sudden death in young people: Heart problems often blamed," March 20, 2024, accessible at <https://www.mayoclinic.org/diseases-conditions/sudden-cardiac-arrest/in-depth/sudden-death/art-20047571>

⁴ British Journal of Sports Medicine, Hank F. Peltó et al., "Effectiveness of cardiac screening inclusive of ECG in young athletes," April 2014, accessible at https://www.researchgate.net/publication/260718808_Effectiveness_of_cardiac_screening_inclusive_of_ECG_in_young_athletes

For each minute that passes without CPR, the likelihood of survival for an individual experiencing sudden cardiac arrest decreases by 10%. However, having a cardiac emergency response plan can significantly increase survival chances, potentially more than doubling them. In schools equipped with AEDs, around 70% of children who experience cardiac arrest survive.⁵

I respectfully request \$10,000,000 in FY2026 appropriations for this program to help save the lives of students across the country.

Thank you for considering my request, and I look forward to working with the Subcommittee to include this provision in the FY2026 LHHS appropriations bill. If you have any questions regarding this request, please reach out to my office.

Sincerely,



Sheila Cherfilus-McCormick

Member of Congress

⁵ Stat News, Opinion, Nancy Brown, "Congress can prevent deaths from cardiac arrest if it acts now," October 4, 2024, accessible at <https://www.statnews.com/2024/10/04/hearts-act-senate-access-to-aeds-act/>

Testimony of Congressman Johnny Olszewski (MD-02)**Member Day Hearing****House Committee on Appropriations****Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human Services, Education, and Related Agencies****March 17, 2025**

Chairman Aderholt, Ranking Member DeLauro, and members of the subcommittee, I appreciate the opportunity to submit this testimony in support of critical programs that enhance education, handle public health, and drive groundbreaking research that produces lifesaving results and improve the wellbeing of all Americans.

As you continue to draft and finalize the Fiscal Year (FY) 2026 Labor, Health and Human Services, Education, and Related Agencies (LHHS-Ed) Appropriations bills, I respectfully urge you to provide robust funding for the National Institutes of Health (NIH) and to reverse cuts that would undermine vital research, particularly the ability to expand access clinical trials, new medicines, and life-saving treatments.

Johns Hopkins University (“JHU” or “The University”) of Medicine is America’s first research university, home to ten world-class academic divisions and the Applied Physics laboratory. JHU, a leader in medical research and innovation, serves as a global health network consisting of six academic and community hospitals, physician offices, and outpatient locations that deliver exceptional care to patients. The University and its hospitals are anchors for innovation and research in the Baltimore region and their work has a ripple effect of improving lives throughout the country.

The recently passed and signed full year Continuing Resolution (CR) cuts funding for NIH by \$280 million. Any cuts in this funding will make JHU’s lifesaving work and research impossible.

For examples, a Baltimore native, Vanessa, was able to receive groundbreaking immunotherapy treatment at the Sidney Kimmel Comprehensive Cancer Center at Johns Hopkins. Vanessa, who joined an NIH funded trial for the drug pembrolizumab after her advanced colon cancer diagnosis, shared that “During chemotherapy, I felt like I was dying. With immunotherapy, I felt like my body accepted it.” This therapy, which stemmed from NIH funded research, gave Vanessa her life back. She has since been able to see her grandchildren attend college.

Similarly, Michele Decker, a Professor at Johns Hopkins, leads research on gender equity and gender-based violence says her team rely on funding from the NIH to study how violence survivors can find and access help more quickly. With homicide being a leading cause of death for women, particularly at the hands of their intimate partners, the research underway in Baltimore is crucial in addressing this crisis.

In Baltimore, federally funded research is proving how powerful having safe housing can be for a victim who is experiencing partner violence. It is my hope JHU can continue to be a leading example for how we come together as a country to support victims.

I urge you to consider the profound impact NIH-funded research and developments has on everyday American's faced with the hardships of cancer and rare diseases. Thank you for your consideration and look forward to working with you to help better protect their health and safety.

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Testimony for the Record by Congressman Gilbert R. Cisneros, Jr. (CA-31)

U.S. House Committee on Appropriations

Labor, Health and Human Services, and Education Subcommittee

March 17, 2025

Thank you, Chairman Aderholt, Ranking Member DeLauro, and Members of the Appropriations Subcommittee on LHHS for allowing me to testify today in support of essential labor, health and human services, and education appropriations programs on behalf of the residents of California's 31st Congressional District.

I had the privilege of joining in the announcement of a new Community Health Center built after a fire decimated a building in downtown Baldwin Park. This new center will play a vital role in Baldwin Park and the surrounding communities, as 92% of patients are covered by public insurance or are uninsured. This center adds to the 36 sites in California's 31st District serving over 180,000 patients. As you know, Community Health Centers increase access and reduce barriers to the health and well-being of underserved communities. They offer comprehensive medical, dental, psychiatric, pharmaceutical, and substance abuse programs, delivered by well-trained medical professionals. These programs are vital to the well-being of our residents, and I urge you to continue supporting them.

Over the past 15 years, my wife and I have championed educational opportunities and programs for students from underserved communities. I want to stress the need to boost the Pell Grant maximum award as Pell Grant enables millions of low-income students to pay tuition and fees and serves as the cornerstone for all their other student aid. Increasing the maximum Pell Grant award would promote affordability and student success for low-income students, while reducing the need to borrow. After speaking with colleges in my district, I also ask you to strengthen and support funding for institutional aid programs including Minority Serving Institutions, Title III-A Strengthening Institutions, Hispanic Serving Institutions, Historically Black Colleges and Universities, Tribal Colleges and Universities, and Asian American, Native American, Pacific Islander-Serving Institutions. Robust funding for these programs will help reduce achievement gaps and provide significant economic impact for our nation's future.

This federal support is essential in early education as well. In California, the Head Start Preschool Funded Enrollment is about 50,000. Head Start graduates are also healthier, more likely to attend and graduate from college, and are less likely to have a criminal record. The return on investment is \$6.30 in societal benefit for every \$1 invested in early education. However, currently one in five children under the age of five living in poverty have access to Head Start. I urge the committee to increase funding for the Head Start and Early Head Start programs.

I also urge you to prioritize and continue support for Registered Apprenticeships and YouthBuild programs. Apprenticeships are a proven pathway to good-paying jobs and provide necessary on-the-job training and development. These jobs assist in building and growing America's middle class. Additionally, the YouthBuild grant-based program helps at-risk youth in underserved communities by providing education, vocational training, and leadership development, all of

which contribute to building a strong economy and workforce for the next generation. Therefore, I am asking for the Committee to support these programs.

Thank you again for your time and consideration. I know you have a tough job ahead of you and I hope you will keep these priorities in mind as you craft the FY26 LHHS Appropriations for the benefit of our communities.

WITNESSES

	Page
Cooper, Preston	7
Karolewics, Vicki	18
McCarthy, Dr. Mary Alice	25
Parker, Dennis	42
Gentles, Ms. Virginia	88
Burke, Dr. Lindsey	101
Kim, Dr. Robert	109
Coleman, Ms. Starlee	117
Thompson, Hon. Glenn	155
Magaziner, Hon. Seth	161

