

LEGISLATIVE SESSION

ADVANCED GEOTHERMAL INNOVATION LEADERSHIP ACT OF 2019—
Resumed

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate will resume consideration of S. 2657, which the clerk will report.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

A bill (S. 2657) to support innovation in advanced geothermal research and development, and for other purposes.

Pending:

Murkowski amendment No. 1407, in the nature of a substitute.

McConnell (for Ernst) amendment No. 1419 (to amendment No. 1407), to establish a grant program for training wind technicians.

RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Democratic leader is recognized.

WOMEN'S HEALTHCARE

Mr. SCHUMER. Madam President, I just listened to the Republican leader, and there was a glaring omission in his speech. He did not mention what the rally yesterday, my speech, or the case before the Court was about—a woman's constitutional right to choose.

To the women of America: What we are talking about here, what I am fighting for here is your right to choose—an issue, of course, Leader MCCONNELL completely ignored in his speech. I feel so passionately about this issue, and I feel so deeply the anger of women all across America about Senate Republicans and the courts working hand in glove to take down Roe v. Wade.

I just read about a woman in Shreveport who, under the Louisiana law now before the Supreme Court, would have to travel over 300 miles to exercise her constitutional freedoms. And this is happening in States across the country.

Republican State legislatures are restricting a woman's right to choose so severely as to make it nonexistent, and the courts are now likely to go along because Senate Republicans have confirmed nominees they believe will strip away women's rights and fundamentally change this country, going so far as to deny a duly elected President the right to pick a Supreme Court Justice.

Republicans here in the Senate are afraid to confront this issue directly. So they try to accomplish through the courts what they would never accomplish in the court of public opinion, and they leave women out in the cold.

So, yes, I am angry. The women of America are angry. And, yes, we will continue to fight for a woman's right to choose. I will continue to fight for the women of America.

Now, I should not have used the words I used yesterday. They didn't come out the way I intended to. My point was that there would be political consequences—political consequences—

for President Trump and Senate Republicans if the Supreme Court, with the newly confirmed Justices, stripped away a woman's right to choose. Of course, I didn't intend to suggest anything other than political and public opinion consequences for the Supreme Court, and it is a gross distortion to imply otherwise.

I am from Brooklyn. We speak in strong language. I shouldn't have used the words I did, but in no way was I making a threat. I never—never—would do such a thing. Leader MCCONNELL knows that, and Republicans who are busy manufacturing outrage over these comments know that too.

What will remain long after the clamor over my comments dies down is the issue at hand: a woman's constitutional right to choose and Republican attempts to invalidate it.

The fact that my Republican colleagues have worked systematically over the course of decades to install the judicial infrastructure to take down Roe v. Wade and do very real damage to the country and to the American way of life—that is the issue that will remain, and we owe—I owe—an obligation to the women of America to fight for their constitutional rights.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Democratic whip.

Mr. DURBIN. Madam President, I come to the floor this morning as a Senate colleague who may know CHUCK SCHUMER better than most. We lived under the same roof for almost 20 years. We know one another. We know each other's families. We have been together through moments of sadness and triumph. I know him well, and I come to the floor this morning to make this statement.

I respect Chief Justice John Roberts, but I respectfully disagree with the statement he made yesterday about Senator SCHUMER's comments before the Supreme Court Building. It is not in CHUCK SCHUMER's nature to physically threaten anyone—anyone—or to create a dangerous situation for any person. That is just not CHUCK SCHUMER. Even his passion, as you just heard about the issue of women's healthcare, would not lead him to that position. Yes, as he said, he could have chosen his words more carefully, but is there a person in public life who has ever stood in this Chamber or any other who wouldn't say the same about some public utterance?

What troubles me is his being admonished publicly by President Donald Trump for his use of words—being admonished by President Trump for his use of words. It just takes your breath away to think that this President, with his thousands of tweets and statements and utterances—outrageous as they have been—would be standing as a judge of others when it comes to the use of language.

I listened carefully this morning as Senator MCCONNELL, the Republican leader, came to the floor and spoke,

when he talked about his singular respect for the Supreme Court and judicial independence. He used the phrase repeatedly: “judicial independence.” He called the judiciary, rightly, a pillar of the American Government.

Does Senator MCCONNELL think we have forgotten what he did when it came to the Supreme Court after Justice Scalia passed away? He intentionally left a vacancy in the Court for almost a year for political purposes before it was filled.

We remember when President Obama, in the last year of his Presidency, offered the nomination of Merrick Garland, a highly respected circuit court judge for the District of Columbia. Do you remember what this Republican leader, Senator MCCONNELL, did in response—this man who so admires this pillar of the American Government, the judiciary? He refused to even personally meet with Merrick Garland, President Obama's nominee, and he instructed his colleagues on the Republican side to do the same, to shun him, to give him the cold shoulder, and to make it clear that, for a year, there would be a vacancy in the Court because he, Senator MCCONNELL, was praying he would get a political opportunity to fill that vacancy if a Republican were elected to the Presidency. And, of course, that is what happened in 2016.

So for Senator MCCONNELL to come before us and talk about his respect for the Court, keeping politics out of the Court, calling it a pillar of the American Government—has he forgotten what he did to Merrick Garland?

Incidentally, despite his constitutional contortion that, for some reason, in the last year of a Presidency, that President has given up any constitutional right to fill a vacancy, Senator MCCONNELL was recently asked: Well, what if that happens in the last year of President Trump's administration?

Well, he wasted no time saying: Of course, I would let President Trump fill the vacancy—as transparent as possible his partisan motives when it comes to that Supreme Court.

So if he wants to show respect for the Court, it certainly has not been demonstrated, starting with the vacancy of Justice Scalia.

And how about Senator MCCONNELL's single-minded effort to fill every Federal vacancy across the United States as quickly as possible, sadly, with many men and women who scarcely have any experience of service in our judicial system?

So far, President Trump has sent to this Senate, with Senator MCCONNELL's acceptance and approval, nine nominees for the Federal Judiciary who have been found “not qualified” by the American Bar Association, many of them unanimously—nine men and women who have such extreme backgrounds or such limited experience that they shouldn't sit on the Federal bench. But Senator MCCONNELL, with

his respect for the judiciary, couldn't wait to give them lifetime appointments.

Oh, you ask: Wait a minute. What about President Obama? How many did he send to the Senate who were found "not qualified" by the American Bar Association? None. None, not one.

That is what we are facing here with Senator MCCONNELL's singular strategy to fill the courts with people who share his extreme views on women's healthcare, on civil rights, and on so many other fundamental issues.

So preaching on this floor about your respect for the Supreme Court, your respect for our Federal judiciary doesn't go very far when you take a close look at the record that Senator MCCONNELL has written.

At this point, let me suggest that we move forward from this day and not dwell on what the morning headlines might be. We have work to do, and it would be better if we did it in a bipartisan fashion, with respect for one another.

I stand ready to work with those on the other side of the aisle to achieve that goal, but I want to say at this moment that dwelling on this particular chapter doesn't serve the American people. They didn't send us here to squabble and fight. They sent us here to pass important legislation that respects their right to quality, accessible, and affordable healthcare. They sent us here to make sure that women have the basic constitutional right to make the most important personal decisions of their lives. They sent us here to make sure that we serve this country in giving working families a fighting chance. All of the other things that we spend time talking about on this floor diminish in comparison.

It is time for us to roll up our sleeves and let the Senate be more than a rubberstamp for Federal judicial nominations when there are partisan goals in mind by Senator MCCONNELL and others.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. THUNE. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

SUPREME COURT

Mr. THUNE. Madam President, as I begin this morning, I want to associate myself with the remarks of the Republican leader, Senator MCCONNELL, earlier this morning.

The attacks that were made by the Democratic leader, Senator SCHUMER, on the Supreme Court yesterday were not only irresponsible; they were reckless and they were shameful. I think we need to just call that what it is.

For them to suggest—for him to suggest—that this isn't what he meant and that this is somehow manufactured

outrage on the part of us or Republicans in general doesn't fit with the way that these comments came across either, because I want to read for you from the CNN Supreme Court reporter: "Schumer, speaking at a rally of abortion rights supporters, appeared to threaten Kavanaugh and Gorsuch, President Trump's two Supreme Court nominees who were confirmed after bruising nomination fights."

That is the interpretation not of FOX News but of CNN.

I think we need to be very clear: When comments like that are made that threaten an independent judiciary in this country, they need to be called out and they need to be walked back. I appreciate the fact that the Democratic leader acknowledged today that he should have said it differently, but it doesn't in any way diminish what was said or the context in which it was said or the attacks that were made on the Supreme Court.

It needs to be recognized as that, and I think all of us need to be, as U.S. Senators, aware—aware—no matter what the audience, particularly when you are the Democratic leader, of how these things come across and what they mean to the people who have been threatened by them.

CORONAVIRUS

Madam President, I am pleased that Republicans and Democrats in both Chambers have quickly come together to provide emergency funding to combat the coronavirus, and I look forward to voting this afternoon to send this important funding measure to the President's desk.

5G

Madam President, on another subject, our Nation is poised for the widespread deployment of the next generation of internet technology: 5G. With its incredible speed and connectivity, 5G will usher in a new era of innovation. Advances in medical care, the large-scale deployment of precision agriculture, safer transportation technologies—5G will bring all of these things and more.

But, like any new technology, 5G networks will present new risks and vulnerabilities. Because 5G will mean a vastly greater number of connected devices, the risks with 5G will be greater. That is why an essential part of deploying 5G networks has to be looking at how we can mitigate security risks.

Yesterday, the Senate Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation, of which I am a member, held a hearing on supply chain risks for 5G. We need to ensure that the component parts of our devices and, critically, the component parts of telecommunications networks, like cell towers and the small cells that will be required for 5G, are secure.

That means ensuring that 5G equipment comes from trusted vendors. Currently, one of the biggest suppliers of 5G equipment worldwide is a Chinese company—Huawei—which is supported by the Chinese Government. American

security officials have raised concerns that much of Huawei's equipment is built with "backdoors," giving the Chinese Government access to global communications networks.

The United States has taken a number of steps to prevent equipment from Huawei and another suspect Chinese company, ZTE, from being used in U.S. communications networks, but these companies still pose a risk to the United States. For starters, some U.S. broadband providers, often in rural areas, still have equipment from Huawei and ZTE in their communications networks, and a number of our allies and trade partners, entities with whom we regularly share information—including sensitive national security information—have used or are using technology from Huawei and ZTE.

Yesterday's Commerce Committee hearing focused on both of these issues. We discussed so-called "rip and replace," an initiative already underway to replace suspect telecommunications components with hardware from trusted companies.

Last week, the Senate unanimously passed the Secure and Trusted Communications Networks Act, which is now with the President to be signed into law. This legislation will help telecommunications providers with the cost of replacing network components that pose a security risk. I cosponsored this legislation, which was developed by Commerce Committee Chairman ROGER WICKER.

Madam President, cost is a major obstacle for small broadband providers when it comes to replacing telecommunications hardware, but, as one expert witness at the hearing noted, a lack of qualified telecommunications workers also poses a barrier to replacement.

I recently introduced legislation, the Telecommunications Skilled Workforce Act, to help increase the number of workers on the frontlines of replacing this equipment and deploying new, secure 5G networks. I hope this legislation will quickly make its way through the Senate. Replacing problematic hardware in our domestic telecommunications networks will help ensure the security of our communications for years to come.

As I said earlier, that is not the only challenge that we are facing. We regularly exchange information, including sensitive national security information, with our allies and trading partners, and this information can only be secure if networks on both ends are secure. That is why the United States has called for other countries to reject telecommunications technology from Huawei and ZTE. While some countries have committed to using trusted companies to build out their telecommunications networks, other countries are still planning to make use of Huawei's technology.

That is why I am introducing legislation today to make telecommunications security a key objective when

negotiating future trade deals. This legislation is critical as the United States begins formal trade talks with the United Kingdom and with other allies. We should be using trade agreements to push for enhanced network security globally, which would benefit not only our country but every country with which we do business.

As one witness noted at yesterday's hearing, this legislation is "long overdue." I could not agree more. Over the past few years, we have talked a lot about the importance of having the United States win the global race to 5G. There are important reasons for that. For starters, having the United States at the forefront of 5G technology will mean big benefits for our economy and for American workers, but there are also important security reasons to have the United States at the head of the 5G revolution. If we lead the world in implementing 5G, we will have the chance to set standards for 5G deployment—including, most importantly, network security standards.

It is no exaggeration to say that having the chance to set worldwide standards for 5G is critical—it is critical—to our national security. Our telecommunications networks already play a huge role in our national security, and that role will only grow as we fully adopt 5G technology. We need to ensure that U.S. networks are as secure as it is possible for them to be.

I appreciated the witnesses who took the time to address the Commerce Committee yesterday. There is no better way to learn what needs to be done for 5G security than to hear from the people on the ground who spend every waking day managing network security issues. I look forward to continuing to work with all of my colleagues in the Senate to advance telecommunications security and ensure that the United States is fully prepared for the 5G future.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. GRAHAM. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. BRAUN). Without objection, it is so ordered.

CORONAVIRUS

Mr. GRAHAM. Mr. President, later in the day, I will be making a motion to table the Paul amendment that would require offsetting the \$7.76 billion for the coronavirus against the foreign operations account.

Senator PAUL is at it again. He is consistent. I respect his view; I just reject it. What he would be doing is basically upending the fiscal year 2020 agreement on foreign assistance spending passed by Congress and signed into law by President Trump. He would be putting our Nation at risk if this amendment actually passed.

One percent of the Federal spending is foreign assistance in different fashions and ways, including our commitment to our friends in Israel and other programs we have that I think are national-defense oriented.

The U.S. Global Leadership Coalition—consisting of 500 businesses, NGOs, military, and faith leaders—has warned that "cuts of this magnitude would have devastating consequences on our ability to confront unprecedented global challenges—including countering China's growing influence around the world, supporting partners in the fight against extremism, and addressing the impacts of the Venezuelan refugee crisis on key allies like Colombia."

I would even go further: This cut would devastate the foreign assistance account in terms of being able to deal effectively with the effects of the virus overseas.

David Beasley, head of the World Food Programme, warned in an AP article, which I would like to make part of the RECORD, that "if the coronavirus continues to create panic around the world, and there is an economic downturn, I have been telling European leaders, and leaders around the world, you don't have enough money set aside to address the needs in Africa, East Africa, West Africa, in the Middle East right now."

We are only beginning to understand the cost associated with the virus.

I want to compliment Senators SHELBY and LEAHY for putting this package together. I compliment the White House, the Senate, and the House. There was a huge vote in the House.

If we accept Senator PAUL's offset amendment, we will be devastating our ability as a nation to deal with this matter overseas.

As to Senator PAUL's world view, I have consistently rejected it. When it comes to international terrorism, I have no desire to go back to the pre-9/11 footprint of where we ignore problems over there, hoping they will not come here. When it comes to fighting disease and containing viruses, I think we understand that we have to be present over there, and in an effective way, to control the spread of the coronavirus, Ebola, and other diseases that can make their way to America.

We have always rejected these types of offsets by Senator PAUL. I think the best thing we can do is have an overwhelming bipartisan vote. Count me in for dealing with the deficit, but this is penny wise and pound foolish because the \$7.6 billion, if it is taken out of the foreign operations account, makes this country less safe on multiple fronts.

I will be making a motion to table at the appropriate time. And I urge my colleagues to understand that what happens over there matters to us over here. This would devastate programs like the Benjamin Gilman International Scholarships and participant schools like Berea College and Western

Kentucky University. There is a ripple effect of enormous proportions. It is not going to do much for the debt, but it will do a lot to make us less safe.

I yield to Senator LEAHY.

Mr. LEAHY. Mr. President, my friend and colleague on the floor—I totally agree with what he just said. Senator SHELBY and I will be giving longer statements in a few minutes.

Senator GRAHAM and I have had the duty to put through the Foreign Operations bill for a number of years now. We tried to do it in a bipartisan and nonpartisan way, and as a result, it has gotten very strong support from both sides of the aisle, which is what we hope will happen now.

I will certainly be voting with Senator GRAHAM's motion to table when he makes it. Every Senator—he or she—can vote any way they want, but I would note for our colleagues, Senator SHELBY and I and key Senators—including the Senator now on the floor—in both parties have worked every day, every evening, our staffs on weekends, in order to get to where we are. This is a product of every single Republican, every single Democrat who wanted a voice in this, a chance to speak to it. Both Senator SHELBY, as chairman, and I, as vice chairman, made sure that voices were heard.

I yield the floor.

Mr. GRAHAM. I would like to again compliment you and Senator SHELBY. You always deliver. You always seem to be able to do things that other people can't do at a time when we need you to deliver for the body and the country.

Mr. President, I would like to have printed in the RECORD an article, "UN food aid chief fears for Africa, Mideast amid new crises," and a U.S. Global Leadership Coalition letter, dated March 5, 2020.

There being no objection, the material was ordered to be printed in the RECORD, as follows:

UN FOOD AID CHIEF FEARS FOR AFRICA, MIDEAST AMID NEW CRISES [March 5, 2020]

AMMAN, JORDAN (AP)—The head of the U.N.'s food aid agency warned of "absolute devastation" in Africa and parts of the Middle East in coming months if wealthier nations grappling with an economic downturn linked to the new coronavirus don't step up aid efforts in countries in need.

David Beasley, head of the World Food Program, told The Associated Press that the convergence of several crises could further destabilize conflict-scarred regions.

"If the corona virus continues to create panic around the world, and there is an economic downturn, I have been telling the European leaders, and leaders around the world, you don't have enough money set aside to address the needs in Africa, East Africa, West Africa, in the Middle East right now," Beasley said during an interview in Jordan late Wednesday, after a visit to Syria.

"If there is an economic downturn, on top of the economic downturn that exists now in Syria and Lebanon, it absolutely could be a catastrophe," he said. "I mean absolute devastation. I am very concerned about what would happen in the next six months. You

could see destabilization unlike any time period, maybe in my lifetime.”

In the Middle East, Iran has been hardest hit by the new virus which has spread around the globe after first being detected in the Chinese city of Wuhan late last year. There are over 3,740 cases of the virus across the Mideast, with most linking back to the Islamic Republic which also confirmed dozens of deaths. Only a small number of cases has been reported in Sub-Saharan Africa so far.

Beasley did not give an amount for additional aid needed, but suggested it would be in the billions of dollars. Beasley spoke after a tour of Syria's northwestern Idlib province, the country's last rebel stronghold, where hundreds of thousands of civilians have been displaced in recent weeks by a Russian-backed Syrian government offensive.

U.N. agencies, including the WFP, are distributing aid in Idlib, but are often hampered by logistics problems, including shifting front lines, access restrictions and roads clogged by large numbers of people on the move.

The leaders of Russia, which backs the Syrian government, and Turkey, which backs the rebels, were meeting in Moscow on Thursday to try to avert further calamity. But any deal will likely bring only a temporary halt in the punishing offensive by the military of Syria's President Bashar Assad, which threatens continued suffering for the 3 million people trapped in Idlib.

Beasley appealed to leaders on all sides of the Syrian conflict to end the war, which has raged for nine years. “Enough is enough,” he said. “Too many people have suffered too long.”

U.S. GLOBAL LEADERSHIP COALITION,
March 5, 2020.

Hon. LINDSEY GRAHAM,
Chairman, Subcommittee on State-Foreign Operations, Committee on Appropriations, U.S. Senate, Washington, DC.

Hon. PATRICK LEAHY,
Ranking Member, Subcommittee on State-Foreign Operations, Committee on Appropriations, U.S. Senate, Washington, DC.

DEAR CHAIRMAN GRAHAM AND RANKING MEMBER LEAHY: On behalf of the more than 500 business and NGO members of the U.S. Global Leadership Coalition (USGLC), including business, military, and faith-based leaders in all 50 states, I write in strong opposition to an amendment proposed by Senator Rand Paul that would offset emergency funding to address the growing coronavirus threat by canceling over \$8 billion in congressionally approved funds for the International Affairs Budget.

If enacted, this amendment would cancel critical funding for State Department, USAID, and other development programs around the world, undermining our national security and economic interests and placing America's global leadership at risk. Cuts of this magnitude would have devastating consequences on our ability to confront unprecedented global challenges—including countering China's growing influence around the world, supporting partners in the fight against extremism, and addressing the impacts of the Venezuelan refugee crisis on key allies like Colombia.

There is a strong bipartisan legacy in the Senate of rejecting deep and dangerous cuts to America's development and diplomacy programs. I urge the Senate to once again take decisive action and reject Senator Paul's shortsighted amendment. Doing so will ensure that resources already approved by Congress can be fully deployed to support cost-effective programs that advance America's interests.

Thank you for your unwavering support of America's international affairs programs and

your commitment to strengthening the critical resources needed to advance America's global leadership.

Sincerely,

LIZ SCHRAYER,
President & CEO, USGLC.

Mr. GRAHAM. Mr. President, I wrap up by saying that Senator PAUL is consistent. Every time he wants to pay for something, he comes to the foreign assistance account. I understand the argument: Why are we spending over there when we have problems here? That sounds good until you realize how the world is.

On September 10, 2001, the day before 9/11, we didn't have one soldier in Afghanistan, not an embassy, not an ambassador, not a dime of aid. The Taliban were in charge, and they gave al-Qaida safe haven. That is where the planning of the attacks and 9/11 originated. Looking back, wouldn't it have been nice to have had some influence in Afghanistan on September 10?

All I can say is, I will never go back to that pre-9/11 mindset of ignoring the world, because I have learned, like most Americans, the world can come here in a very bad way or very good way, depending on how we defend ourselves.

This 1 percent of the budget—foreign assistance to deal with problems over there—is absolutely essential in terms of global health. He exempted the global health component of the foreign assistance account, but the money—\$7.76 billion—will destroy other things in the account that I think are vital to our public health here and our national security and our alliances. You cannot fight problems like this by yourself. You need partners. You need to get involved over there so the virus doesn't spread any more here than necessary.

I hope that people will listen to what Senator LEAHY just said, that this was a negotiated agreement. We all came together to get a budget. Senators SHELBY and LEAHY did a wonderful job working with the House and the White House to get us to where we are today. This amendment would upset everything. I am going to move to table it at the appropriate time.

With that, I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. CARDIN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

CORONAVIRUS PREPAREDNESS AND RESPONSE SUPPLEMENTAL APPROPRIATIONS ACT, 2020

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate will proceed to the consideration of H.R. 6074, which the clerk will report.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

A bill (H.R. 6074) making emergency supplemental appropriations for the fiscal year

ending September 30, 2020, and for other purposes.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Maryland.

TRUE EQUITY ACT

Mr. CARDIN. Mr. President, at the end of fiscal year 2021, the 5-year authorization for the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, our Nation's foundational prekindergarten through 12th grade law, is due to expire.

While I understand that previous reauthorizations took 13 years and allowed an entire generation of students to matriculate through school systems around our Nation, I am here today to stress that our kids can't wait for the needed transformational changes to our Nation's Federal, State, and local education policies and additional funding investments.

To provide a stronger Federal partnership to States and local communities that have worked together to support transformational change that will ensure educational equity and quality for all public school students, I introduced the TRUE EQUITY Act. It stands for the Transformational Reforms and Updates to Ensure Educational Quality and Urgent Investments in Today's Youth Act.

My home State of Maryland has been long recognized as having one of the best public school systems in the country, according to the independent newspaper Education Week. This ranges from having entire county-based local school systems ranked as near the top in the Nation to individual schools producing national leaders in academic achievement. In addition, Maryland was one of the first States to offer half-day preschool for 4-year-olds, has broad access to Advanced Placement courses for high schoolers, and pays for dual-enrollment courses for high school students at our local community colleges.

I am proud of these accomplishments. However, not all of our students have found success.

In 2016, the Maryland General Assembly and the Governor of Maryland established the Maryland Commission on Innovation and Excellence in Education, chaired by the former chancellor of the University System of Maryland, William “Brit” Kirwan, to identify the policies and practices so that Maryland's schools perform at the level of the world's highest performing school system. The commission was charged with a number of tasks, including a review of the current funding formulas and accountability measures utilized to ensure educational equity and equality, how Maryland schools prepare students for postsecondary education in the workforce, and to make recommendations for the State on needed funding improvements across the State and local school districts.

These reviews are necessary to support growing populations of children with disabilities, how to improve and expand programs supporting postsecondary credential attainment, and