

**Chairman Roy Blunt Opening Statement
Committee on Appropriations Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human Services,
Education and Related Agencies**

Hearing to Review the FY2020 Budget Request for the Department of Education

March 28, 2019

(As prepared for delivery)

Good morning. This is our first FY2020 budget hearing. Thank you, Secretary DeVos, for appearing before the Subcommittee today to discuss the Department of Education's FY2020 budget request and helping us kick off this year's appropriations process.

Last year we passed a Labor/HHS bill prior to the start of the fiscal year for the first time in 22 years. The conference agreement received 93 votes on the Senate floor. A pattern begins in year two, and I hope this is the beginning of a trend that starts today.

The FY2020 budget request for the Department of Education is \$64 billion in discretionary funding, \$7.4 billion, or 10 percent, less than FY2019.

This request is similar to last year's request in many respects. Like last year, it eliminates or consolidates approximately 30 programs, and significantly reduces funding for several others. All of the programs proposed for elimination or significant reductions were proposed last year too.

I continue to appreciate the tough decisions this budget forces you to make, many the result of the caps in place from the Budget Control Act. The President's budget proposes to reduce non-defense discretionary by \$55 billion or over 9 percent. The request for the Department of Education is roughly in line with those overall numbers.

I agree that we should constantly evaluate programs and be willing to reduce or eliminate funding for programs that are ineffective and prioritize that funding elsewhere. We have made those difficult decisions in previous budgets and I know we have more we could do in that regard. However, as similar as this request is to previous ones, I expect the Committee will have much the same reaction as it did to those.

This subcommittee will not pass an appropriations bill that eliminates large state formula grants that support afterschool programs, STEM education, school safety, and teacher professional development. We both agree, and I think the entire subcommittee does as well, that decisions affecting the education of children should be made as close to the student as possible – by parents, teachers, schools, and school districts. That's exactly what these programs do, many of which go directly to local school districts to be used for a range of activities to best meet the needs of local communities.

Further, while some small, targeted grant programs may not have widespread impacts simply because of their size, they can be life-changing for the students and families they touch and build

the evidence-base for states and school districts to fund such activities. For example, I have seen Special Olympics athletes compete in Missouri and in the World Games. The limited funding this subcommittee provides for Special Olympics leverages private resources to help schools implement comprehensive policies to transform school climates and ensure that students with disabilities are fully welcomed and included in student-life. This funding has directly impacted the lives of thousands of students both with and without intellectual disabilities. It also provides a model for other schools and districts to support this kind of work without direct federal funding.

While the budget makes significant cuts to existing programs, the budget request does include some new initiatives. For example, there is a proposal for a new Adult Education Fast Track Apprenticeships for Low-Skilled Adults program. This subcommittee has strongly supported investments in apprenticeship programs through the Department of Labor over the past four years. I would like to hear more details on how this program would be aligned with and complement those programs.

Further, I am also interested in how we can support states and schools in better preparing all students for college and careers. In communities across Missouri, I hear about the importance of providing students with the skills and opportunities to compete for the jobs of today and the future. When I was in St. Louis in February with the Secretary of Labor, we met with students taking part in a program run by the St. Louis Community College's Center for Workforce Innovation. This program offers students multiple career pathways, including pre-apprenticeship in advanced manufacturing and pre-employment programs in aircraft assembly, allowing students to apply any credits earned toward a degree using Pell Grants. I believe it is critical that students have the opportunity to enhance their education in ways that both help them earn industry-recognized credentials as well as supports their goal of receiving a post-secondary degree.

I will continue to support programs that expand STEM education, high-quality career and technical education, and promote college affordability and completion.

Madame Secretary, thank you again for being here today. I look forward to hearing your testimony and appreciate your dialogue with us about these and other important issues that impact students at every level in their academic careers.

Thank you.

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