

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

**Statement by Betsy DeVos
Secretary of Education
on the
U.S. Department of Education Fiscal Year 2019 Budget Request**

Mr. Chairman and Members of the Subcommittee:

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on the President’s Fiscal Year 2019 Budget Request for the Department of Education.

This Department’s Budget focuses on improving educational opportunities and outcomes for all students while also returning power to those closest to them.

Ultimately, this Budget sharpens and hones the focus of our mission: serving students by meeting *their* needs. When this Department was created, it was charged with prohibiting Federal control of education.¹ I take that charge seriously. Accordingly, President Trump is committed to reducing the Federal footprint in education, and that is reflected in this Budget.

I won’t miss an opportunity to point out that past Federal education reform efforts have not worked as hoped. Too many of our children are still unprepared to lead successful careers and fulfilling lives, despite billions of dollars injected into the system with the goal of improving the outcome.

The United States spends more per pupil than nearly every other developed country, many of which perform better than our Nation on the international stage. Yet there are many who, despite the evidence to the contrary, continue to push “more funding” as the answer to every challenge. Student success should be measured by the outcomes – by what they achieve. It

¹ Department of Education Organization Act, Section 103(b); <https://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/STATUTE-93/pdf/STATUTE-93-Pg668.pdf>

should not be measured by the number of inputs. That's why this Budget refocuses taxpayer dollars more effectively to benefit students.

The President's Fiscal Year (FY) 2019 Budget would reduce overall funding for Department programs by \$3.7 billion or 5.6 percent from FY 2017 enacted levels.

The Budget was initially prepared prior to enactment of a 2-year cap deal, which raises the FY 2019 caps significantly above the previous cap levels. To account for the resulting higher non-defense spending levels in the most fiscally responsible manner, the Administration submitted an addendum to its 2019 Budget that includes nearly \$3 billion in additional funding for a limited set of Administration priorities under the new, higher cap levels. The FY 2019 Budget request is \$7.6 billion or 10.8 percent below the FY 2018 enacted appropriation.

This addendum restores valuable investments in students, including Impact Aid Basic Support Payments, TRIO, school choice, and Federal Work-Study, while eliminating a proposed rescission of Pell Grant balances.

This Budget seeks to support and empower families and expand postsecondary pathways, helping ensure students lead successful careers and fulfilling lives.

First, our request would provide significant new resources dedicated to helping achieve the President's goal of giving every student the freedom to attend a school that best meets his or her unique needs.

The Budget provides funding for this purpose through a new Opportunity Grants program that would expand the number of students who have the opportunity to attend a school of *their* choice. Under this new program, States could apply for funding to provide scholarships to students from low-income families that could be used to transfer to a different school, and local educational agencies participating in the Department's weighted student-centered funding pilot

could request funds to build on the flexibility provided by establishing or expanding open enrollment programs.

In addition, the Budget requests support for charter schools by providing an increase of \$100 million—for a total of \$500 million—and continues support for magnet schools. We also are proposing to expand the Direct Student Services reservation in section 1003A of the ESEA to allow States to reserve up to 5 percent of their Title I allocations to further expand educational choice, including helping disadvantaged students attending a school identified for improvement to transfer to a higher-performing school.

Second, the Administration’s request recognizes the importance of maintaining strong support for students with disabilities. Our request intended to maintain funding for programs authorized under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), including essential preschool and K-12 formula grant programs that provide basic support to schools and programs that support research, demonstrations, technical assistance and dissemination, and personnel preparation and development.

Third, our request creates more pathways to prepare workers to fill existing and newly created jobs, as well as jobs of the future. It includes proposals that would promote multiple pathways to successful careers while minimizing costs to students and families. The Administration believes students need to have a full host of options, including technical schools, community colleges, and apprenticeships.

Students should be able to pursue a variety of pathways to successful careers. To that end, funding should follow the student, as they do in the Pell Grant program. The Budget requests expansion of the use of Pell Grants for high-quality, short-term programs. In addition, it invests in career and technical education, and streamlines student loan repayment.

These proposals also support congressional efforts to reauthorize the Higher Education Act to address student debt and higher education costs while reducing the complexity of student financial aid.

Fourth, our request supports STEM education to help better equip America's young people with the relevant knowledge and skills that will enable them to secure high-paying, stable jobs throughout their careers. Consistent with the Presidential Memorandum on STEM education, our request includes \$200 million in new funding to support STEM education while continuing to fund almost \$330 million in discretionary grants for STEM projects.

Fifth, we look forward to working with Congress on promoting a safe and healthy culture in our schools. Our commitment to every student's success is one we must renew every day, but first we must ensure our children are safe at school. The tragedy at Santa Fe High School in Texas was only the most recent, devastating reminder that our Nation must come together to address the underlying issues that create a culture of violence.

This Administration is committed to keeping our Nation's students and teachers safe at school. I've directed my Department to do everything within the law to encourage states and districts to take advantage of flexibilities in spending the \$1.1 billion in new funding available beginning July 1 under the flexible Title IV-A grant program. Naturally, the primary responsibility for the physical security of schools rests with states and local communities. Schools must have the resources they need to improve safety infrastructure, hire more counselors, and host more programs and activities aimed at violence prevention. We owe the victims of school violence nothing less.

Our request also supports a new round of School Climate Transformation Grants that will help States support effective implementation of school-based opioid abuse prevention strategies

by addressing mental health and other needs of students affected by the epidemic. This funding would also support technical assistance centers that develop and provide opioid abuse prevention resources that would be publicly available to all schools and postsecondary institutions.

Finally, our request reflects a number of reform proposals aimed at streamlining the Department's internal organization and improving the Department's services to States, districts, postsecondary institutions, and the public. We recommend, for instance, a number of consolidations, including proposals for the Federal TRIO programs and the HEA Title III and Title V programs supporting Minority-Serving Institutions, making them formula grants so that States may use the funds more effectively. The Budget eliminates, streamlines, or reduces funding for many discretionary programs that do not address national needs, duplicate other programs, are ineffective, or are more appropriately supported with State, local, or private funds — reducing taxpayer costs by \$7.6 billion.

The Budget reflects our commitment to spending taxpayer dollars wisely and efficiently. The Federal Government does not – and cannot – know the unique needs of every individual student. Parents and teachers know their students best and know how their needs should be addressed.

With this Budget we can continue to return power to those who walk side-by-side with students every day.

Thank you for this opportunity to testify. I will be happy to respond to any questions you may have.