

U.S. Senator

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Statement of Chairman Tom Harkin

At the Appropriations Subcommittee on LHHS and Education, and Related Agencies Hearing to Examine the Fiscal Year 2015 Budget for the Department of Education

As prepared for delivery

“The Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human Services, Education and Related Agencies will now come to order.

“Welcome back, Secretary Duncan. It’s great to see you again. I’m glad to have you here to talk about your Department’s fiscal year 2015 budget request.

“Your budget’s proposed \$1.3 billion increase is one of the largest of any federal agency, second only to Veterans Affairs. The increase proposed for the Department of Education demonstrates this Administration’s continued commitment to our nation’s future. And, the Budget goes a step further with the Opportunity, Growth, Security Fund which would fully replace sequester in fiscal year 2015 and the subsequent six years of the budget.

“This stands in stark contrast with the approach of Chairman Ryan’s budget. That budget would cut non-defense discretionary spending by \$43 billion, or about 9 percent, in fiscal year 2016, and \$791 billion over 10 years.

“The Ryan budget charts a different course than that established by the 2014 Omnibus appropriations bill. Congress passed that bill on a bipartisan basis earlier this year. This Subcommittee negotiated over \$1 billion in new funding for early learning programs at Education and the Department of Health and Human Services.

“We also secured over \$1 billion total for Title I and IDEA, the core federal programs for elementary and secondary education. The increases for these programs allowed us to restore most of the sequester cuts in fiscal year 2013.

“For higher education, we included a new investment of \$75 million for the First in the World initiative to address college affordability. Colleges and universities will be able to compete for funding to test and develop strategies that reduce college costs and improve student outcomes. This is the first competition to support innovation in higher education since fiscal year 2010.

“We made a good start in the bipartisan omnibus bill and I think we need to continue these important investments, not cut them and leave fewer of our students served.

“However, as the Secretary knows, there are some tough choices to be made under our non-defense discretionary spending cap. The fiscal year 2015 spending cap is roughly the same as the funding level for the current fiscal year. As I noted earlier, the Education Department’s proposed increase of \$1.3 billion is more than the increase allowed for ALL of nondefense discretionary spending.

“This makes it very difficult to provide the kind of investments this budget so wisely advocates. But that’s not our only challenge. I am hopeful that this hearing will give the Secretary an opportunity to answer those who question the necessity of continuing to support the important work being done by your Department at all levels of education.

“Again, Secretary Duncan, I want to thank you for appearing before the Subcommittee. I turn now to Senator Moran for his opening statement.”

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