

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

**Hearing to Review the FY2018 Budget Request for the U.S. Department of Education**

**June 6, 2017**

*(As prepared for delivery)*

Good morning. Thank you, Secretary DeVos, for appearing before the Subcommittee today to discuss the Department of Education's FY2018 budget request.

This is a difficult budget request to defend. Just over a month ago Congress overwhelmingly passed, and the President signed into law, an appropriations bill that included \$161 billion in discretionary funding for this Subcommittee, which was \$1 billion less than fiscal year 2016. That funding allowed us to provide modest increases for several priorities, including restoring Year Round Pell at the Department of Education. But it also required difficult decisions, and the reduction or elimination of dozens of programs. Simply put, this Subcommittee made tough choices to prioritize funding in a difficult budget environment.

This year, the fiscal year 2018 budget request proposes a significant funding decrease for the Labor/HHS bill, approximately \$24 billion below fiscal year 2017. That is 15 percent below the bill we passed just last month.

For the Department of Education, the proposal includes approximately \$59 billion, a \$9.2 billion reduction. I agree that there are many places in the Department's budget we should look to for savings. You bring a fresh perspective to the budget and I hope we can work together to identify programs that are ineffective and inefficient and put that funding to better use elsewhere.

However, such a significant cut to the Department's budget is likely untenable. In reviewing this budget request it is difficult to know whether you made cuts because you believe the programs are truly ineffective or because your budget number required these reductions just to reach the bottom line.

For example, I believe significant reductions to programs like Career and Technical Education, TRIO, and Federal Work Study will make it harder for students to get into and complete college, and go on to well-paying jobs. The outright elimination of several large formula grant programs, like 21st Century Community Learning Centers, would be all but impossible to get out of this Subcommittee. The budget also makes cuts proposed by previous administrations that have never been accepted by Congress, like the reduction to Impact Aid Payments for the Federal Property program. Finally, the proposal eliminates several smaller targeted, but important, programs like Special Olympics. This is an area where a small Federal investment can go a long way in leveraging philanthropic funding.

These differences aside, I know we will find areas of common ground in the budget. This Subcommittee will want to hear more about your priorities, including expanding school choice. Over the last two years, this Subcommittee increased funding for Charter Schools from \$253 million to \$342 million. I am interested in learning more about your broader proposals and perspective on these important issues.

Finally, I look forward to working with you on realigning the Department of Education's role in our education system. I believe education decisions should be made as close to the student, family, and school as possible. Jefferson City is often too far away to make decisions impacting Missouri students, let alone making these critical decisions from Washington, D.C.

Madame Secretary, I look forward to hearing your testimony today and appreciate your dialogue with us about these important issues.

Thank you.

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