



Chairman Tom Cole

*Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human Services,
Education, and Related Agencies
House Committee on Appropriations*

Opening Statement (as prepared)

Full Committee Markup of the Fiscal Year 2019 Labor, HHS, Education Bill July 11, 2018

Good morning. This morning I present to you my bill, which provides support for important programs that touch the lives of every American in the areas of labor, health, human services, education and social security.

And I think that statement that this bill does touch the life of every American is reflected by the fact that, since I've been Chairman of this subcommittee, no other subcommittee on appropriations has received more requests from either Democrats or Republicans. For fiscal year 2019, the subcommittee received an overwhelming twelve thousand, seven hundred requests from members. This year represents an eight percent increase in member submissions over the prior year.

We evaluated each request received and worked diligently to fulfill as many as possible. I'm pleased to say that the bill before us addresses about ninety percent of these requests.

The bill I will present today continues to focus on key national priorities – investing in biomedical research, to find cures for diseases like Alzheimer's and cancer; ensuring our country is fully prepared and able to protect our citizens from disease outbreaks or bioterrorism; continuing to support early childhood education, particularly for those at-risk; helping first-generation college students prepare for, access and complete a postsecondary education; and continuing to support people living with disabilities. The bill also increases funding for popular programs like career and technical education, programs to improve school safety and computer literacy in our schools, and programs that help our veterans retrain to continue to contribute in the workforce.

The National Institutes of Health, our Nation's premier biomedical research agency, is funded at \$1.25 billion above last year. NIH is working to find cures for Alzheimer's disease, cancer and develop the next generation of medical treatment through the use of precision medicine techniques. We need to continue to build upon the \$3 billion increase provided in the omnibus last year, and the \$2 billion increases enacted in each of the two years prior to that. I view the mark we set forth today as a floor – not a ceiling – for biomedical research funding and I am hopeful that this number can increase as the process moves forward.

My bill also sets aside \$300 million for a new Infectious Disease Rapid Response Fund – which will rise to \$325 million following passage of my manager’s amendment this morning. This idea began a few years ago under the leadership of Chairman Hal Rogers, and I found it so compelling that I’ve returned to it again. Rather than waiting for a new infectious disease like Ebola or Zika to appear, and forcing Congress into the position of rushing to fund an expensive supplemental bill in response, my bill sets aside funding this year that will remain available and can continue to grow so that the Secretary of Health and Human Services will immediately have resources at his or her disposal to respond to an event like this without waiting for Congress to act on a supplemental.

This idea makes good sense from a public health perspective, but it makes good sense from a fiscal discipline perspective also. We all know that when the pressure to respond to a crisis is on, supplemental bills tend to swell and take on extraneous provisions. By banking funds now, and setting them aside for a crisis, we will prevent that dynamic, thus resulting in real savings for the taxpayer in the long run.

Of course, every member of this body is aware of the terrible toll opioid abuse is taking on our nation. I’m proud to say this bill continues comprehensive grants to states, localities and tribes to develop anti-opioid initiatives focused on prevention, education, treatment and recovery services, building on the work begun in the 21st Century Cures Act.

I’m a big believer that early intervention in the life of a child can pay huge dividends down the road. To that end, Head Start receives a \$50 million increase in this bill. Preschool programs are continued at \$250 million, and Child Care programs are continued at the historic levels contained in the FY18 omnibus.

Special education programs for students with disabilities are increased by \$100 million, which will help local school districts ease the financial burden of providing specialized educational services. TRIO and GEARUP, which help disadvantaged students prepare for and complete college, receive increases of \$50 million and \$10 million, respectively, over last year.

The bill also includes an additional \$100 million for the Student Support and Academic Enrichment grant program. These funds can be used flexibly by school districts across the country, whether the need is in the area of school safety, computer science instruction or teacher training.

For the first time in many years, we’ve increased funding for career and technical education programs by \$115 million, in response to Member interest in ensuring that students who may not want to pursue a four- year degree get excellent training in careers that will be rewarding both economically and personally.

Pell grants are maintained in the bill at a maximum grant of \$6,095 per student, and the Pell grant surplus is left untouched. The bill also protects the most vulnerable of our Nation’s people by increasing funding for community services, programs supporting Native Americans, veterans and people living with disabilities.

Finally, I want to note that the bill protects human life by continuing long-standing prohibitions against federal tax dollars being used to pay for abortions, and including new provisions that will ensure that no tax dollars are used for research on human fetal tissue obtained from an abortion, and that organizations that continue to provide abortions are prohibited from receiving taxpayer dollars.

We will have a number of amendments from the other side of the aisle today. I suspect you'll see most of these cut along ideological lines disagreeing on matters of policy rather than disagreeing with the way we've divided the pie. I'm pleased that I will shortly be offering a bipartisan manager's amendment, which will improve the bill for Members on both sides of the aisle.

In closing, of course, in addition to thanking my chairman, I also want to thank the ranking members of the both the full and subcommittees, my fellow committee members and the staff of all members for the hard work that has resulted in the bill before us today.

I'm proud of the bill I present to you today. It will make a difference in the lives of every American and maintain appropriate stewardship of taxpayer dollars we have been entrusted with as Members of Congress. However I am well aware that this will change as we mark it up and negotiate with the Senate and the Administration in the weeks and months ahead. As we do I will work hard to be inclusive and accommodating. It will be my aim to craft a final bill that members on both sides of the aisle can support and the President can sign with pride.

I yield back the balance of my time.

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