

**Appropriations Full Committee FY22 Member Day**

**Wednesday June 9, 2021**

**Testimony of Congressman Jamaal Bowman Ed.D.**

**INTRO**

Thank you Chair DeLauro and Ranking Member Granger for the opportunity to testify before the Appropriations Committee today. I recently had the opportunity to testify before the Labor-HHS-Education subcommittee and at this time would like to expand on that testimony now that we have President Biden's complete budget request for the upcoming fiscal year.

I deeply appreciate the incredible work this committee carries out under your leadership, not only for our regular fiscal year spending, but for the COVID relief packages and the anticipated infrastructure package.

I'm here to testify in support of robust investments in programs that directly impact children and families in my district, which covers parts of the Bronx and Westchester.

I'll start off by noting my support for President Biden's budget request, which reflects an understanding of the moment we find ourselves in as a nation. Modest, incremental plus ups to historically underfunded programs will never match the care and repair our communities need due to compounding crises such as COVID-19, racial injustice, gun violence, growing wealth inequality, and the climate crisis. This is not a disparate list. These are all interconnected and extremely traumatic. Without meaningful aid to our communities, our children and families can very quickly find themselves isolated and unsupported. I commend this budget request for recognizing the need for substantial investments. We need to build upon it, not whittle it down further. I strongly urge that we don't negotiate ourselves out of finally securing a healthy and safe future for all our children, communities, and planet.

I previously testified in support of strong investments for all early childhood education programs such as Head Start and the Child Care Development Block Grant, as well as full service community schools, IDEA, and Title II-A funding. I would like to build on that testimony and address two more priorities for the Committee's consideration as it writes the spending bills for Fiscal Year 2022.

As a former teacher, school counselor and principal, I think it's only right that the subcommittee responsible for education funding at the federal level enjoys the largest share of non-defense spending.

I am especially supportive of the \$20 billion increase the President proposes for Title I with the creation of a new 'equity grant' program to meaningfully close the resource gap between richer and poorer districts. This would be particularly meaningful for students, teachers, and families in my district. This funding would equip our communities to teach students using a rigorous curriculum, finally pay teachers better, increase access to preschool, and overall improve equitable funding for schools.

This \$20 billion proposal is long overdue, but I would strongly urge that this funding not be available for charter schools. As this Committee has expressed itself, there is a serious concern with the lack of oversight over charter schools. This is particularly concerning with respect to charter schools that contract with for-profit entities.

I want to commend this budget proposal for investing in broadband and would urge that we build upon it. Inequitable access to broadband took a substantial impact on students and families during the pandemic. We saw students trying to use the WiFi at local restaurants and trying to complete homework on a cell phone. This is a particularly limiting hardship for HUD-assisted households who often receive inadequate access to the internet. I strongly urge that the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development analyze this topic specifically and make their findings available one year after enactment, and that we further explore mechanisms for providing high-quality, subsidized broadband to assisted households, including through the expansion of monthly utility subsidies to include broadband.

Thank you.