



## **Chairman Jack Kingston**

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

### **FY 2015 Department of Education Budget Hearing April 8, 2014 Opening Statement As Prepared**

Good morning Mr. Secretary, and thank you for joining us this morning to present your budget proposal for the Department of Education for fiscal year 2015.

As a reminder to the subcommittee and our witness, we abide by the 5 minute rule in our hearing to accommodate multiple rounds of questions.

The education of America's children is critical not only to prepare them for the workforce, but to strengthen the economic health of our nation as a whole. While the vast majority of funding and responsibility for public PreK-12 education lies at the state and local level, the Federal government plays a limited but important role in supporting equity in educational opportunity for those students most in need, including students with disabilities and from low-income families. Providing for a high-quality education for all improves these students' employment prospects and allows the US to maintain its international competitive edge.

We were able to take some steps in the fiscal year 2014 omnibus appropriations act to support states and school districts to improve quality education. We invested an additional \$625 million in Title I grants to support students from low-income families and impoverished communities, as well as a \$498 million increase for IDEA to improve education for students with special needs. We also invested an additional \$42 million in TRIO programs, which have been proven to help low-income students to prepare for and enter college.

I would like to continue this progress in supporting states and localities. So I was disappointed to see that your budget request for fiscal year 2015 focuses on expanding the Federal role in education through establishing new competitive grant programs that dictate reforms and require burdensome reporting. The administration's request for the Department of Education is the largest dollar increase of all the non-discretionary agencies except for the Department of Veterans' Affairs, but even with all of that additional funding requested, none of it goes toward the core formula grant programs I mentioned that support improving education for students in every district across the country.

In fact, the Department's fiscal year 2015 request seems to double-down on its strategy to invest in unauthorized competitive grant programs that may benefit a handful of schools at the expense

of existing formula grant programs that support schools across the country. For example, the request includes a new iteration of Race to the Top focused on reducing disparities in academic achievement, which is already a stated goal of other Federal education programs, including Title I. You are requesting a new High School Redesign program that would provide competitive grants to align high schools to prepare students for higher education or the workforce, though one would assume that this is already the goal of all high schools. A final example is the new “Results-Driven Accountability” initiative under IDEA. This new program would give competitive grants to districts for special education, which is also the purpose of the IDEA formula grant, for which you requested no increase. The funding would be directed towards a few districts hand-picked by the Department based on their willingness to implement Department-dictated reforms.

Sometimes it is necessary to level fund a program in tough budget times. I understand that. But I do not understand why instead of investing the nearly \$1.3 billion in additional education resources you had to help meet our federal commitment to IDEA, for example, you chose to create brand new programs for which the potential benefits will be limited to just a few schools.

At this time, I would like to yield to the Ranking Member, Rosa DeLauro, for her opening statement.

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