



Chairman Tom Cole

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

**FY 2016 Budget Hearing – Department of Education
March 4, 2015
Opening Statement As Prepared**

Good morning, Mister Secretary. It is my pleasure to welcome you to the Subcommittee on Labor, HHS, and Education to present your budget request for fiscal year 2016 for the Department of Education. We are looking forward to hearing your testimony.

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 educational opportunity for those students most in need, including students with disabilities and from low-income families.

Similarly, the Department is a key partner with states and public and private institutions in making higher education more accessible and affordable. Providing for a high-quality education for all improves these students' employment prospects and allows the US to maintain its international competitive edge. Therefore, it is essential that we conduct proper oversight of Federal education programs and ensure that we are using our resources in the most strategic and effective way.

There are many things in your budget that I think we can all agree are priorities and that we can collectively support. There are others that we may disagree on. The challenge facing this Subcommittee is to support the most critical programs with the limited resources that we will have available to us.

I also sit on the Budget Committee, and the grim reality is that sequester is the law of the land. It is not a policy or choice, it is the law. I expect we will have to appropriate in accordance with this law, because I am not convinced we can get out of it by the time we mark up these bills.

I am hopeful for a bigger deal, but the President has to engage in some process to do so. Absent these negotiations at higher levels, sequester is where we are. We will have tough choices for every agency, and I think we need to start sitting down and talking sooner rather than later. I look forward to having a discussion with you this morning to identify your top priorities for the year, so that we can invest American taxpayer dollars in the wisest way given our funding constraints.

I would like to yield now to my Ranking Member, the Gentlelady from Connecticut for her opening remarks.

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