

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

Statement by Arne Duncan Secretary of Education U.S. Department of Education Fiscal Year 2016 Budget Request

Mr. Chairman, Ranking Member DeLauro, and Members of the Subcommittee:

I am happy to testify on behalf of the President's 2016 budget request for the Department of Education. The overall discretionary request is \$70.7 billion, an increase of \$3.6 billion, or 5.4 percent, over 2015.

At the end of 2013, policymakers came together on a bipartisan basis to partially reverse sequestration and to pay for higher discretionary funding levels with long-term reforms. We have seen the positive consequences of that bipartisan agreement for our ability to invest in the future, including partially restoring cuts in education programs like Title I and IDEA. We have also seen the positive consequences for our economy, which is experiencing the fastest job growth since the late 1990s.

The President's Budget builds on this progress by reversing sequestration, reducing the deficit, and putting debt on a downward path as a share of the economy. The President has made clear that he will not accept a budget that undoes our progress by locking in sequestration, which would bring real defense and non-defense funding to the lowest levels in a decade. As the Joint Chiefs and others have outlined, that would damage our national security and make it impossible to fully implement the defense strategy.

It would also damage our economy, preventing us from making pro-growth investments in areas ranging from basic research to education. As the President has stated, he will not accept a budget that severs the vital link between our national and economic security.

Reversing sequestration will make space for critical education investments. Even without adjusting for inflation, total discretionary funding for education in 2015, excluding Pell Grants, remains below its fiscal year 2008 level. If you take into account inflation, education funding is 10 percent below 2008. It's time to turn that trend around and invest in the country's most important asset, our people. Evidence shows us that this investment will contribute to better jobs, higher earnings, and ultimately reduced income inequality.

If we can reverse sequestration, Mr. Chairman, you, Ranking Member DeLauro, and the other Members of the Subcommittee can put together a bill that's good for kids and the Nation.

PRESIDENT OBAMA'S 2016 BUDGET REQUEST

Within our budget, we have four key priorities: (1) equity and opportunity for all students; (2) high-quality early learning programs; (3) support for educators; and (4) improving access, affordability, and student outcomes in postsecondary education. The Budget also reflects a strong emphasis on using and developing evidence in order to maximize results for taxpayers and students.

INCREASING EQUITY AND OPPORTUNITY FOR ALL STUDENTS

The first major priority is to ensure all of our young people, especially those poor and minority students in high-poverty schools that are the focus of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA), have the chance to learn and achieve. The outcomes of our education system continue to reflect unacceptable inequities in the distribution of resources, including funding, high-quality teaching, challenging coursework, and other important academic and non-academic supports that contribute to improved student achievement. To close this resource and opportunity gap, the request provides a \$2.7 billion increase, or almost 12 percent, for ESEA programs, including a \$1 billion increase for Title I Grants to Local Educational Agencies

(LEAs)—the cornerstone of the Federal effort to ensure that all students—including poor and minority students, students with disabilities, and English Learners—graduate from high school prepared for college and careers. The request also provides \$11.7 billion, an increase of \$175 million, for Grants to States under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) to support special education and related services for children with disabilities, and \$773 million, an increase of \$36 million, for English Language Acquisition grants for English Learners.

A key request in this area is a new Equity and Outcomes pilot that would promote more equitable and effective uses of Federal formula grant funds. Applicants would demonstrate a commitment to equitably distributing State, local, and Federal dollars—based on actual expenditures—to their highest poverty schools. In exchange, participating districts could receive flexibility from fiscal, monitoring, and reporting requirements for their schools, and could combine Federal formula funds to support a districtwide plan focused on student success.

We are also proposing new resources that would help improve educational opportunities and outcomes in some of our most impoverished communities, including a \$93 million increase for the Promise Neighborhoods program. These funds would help an additional 25 high-poverty communities develop and implement neighborhood-based plans for meeting the cradle-to-career educational, health, and social service needs of children and families in high-poverty communities. In addition, the President’s request includes a \$50 million increase to significantly expand the Native Youth Community Projects program that we are launching in 2015. This proposal would help up to 10 Native American communities develop and implement comprehensive strategies to improve the college- and career-readiness of Native youth.

EXPANDING HIGH-QUALITY EARLY LEARNING PROGRAMS

The United States has fallen behind many countries in providing access to preschool education, and currently ranks just 25th in the world in its enrollment of 4-year-olds. This is why we are renewing our commitment to a \$75 billion mandatory Preschool for All program that would partner with States to support universal access to high-quality preschool for 4-year-olds from low- and moderate-income families. Our preschool request also includes \$750 million in discretionary resources to expand the Preschool Development Grants program to nearly every State that submits a high-quality application.

In addition, we are requesting an increase of \$115 million for IDEA programs to help States provide high-quality special education and early intervention services for all eligible children with disabilities. These funds include \$15 million for Pay for Success pilots to expand early screening and early intervention services for infants and toddlers at risk of autism.

These investments complement important early learning initiatives in the Department of Health and Human services including an historic investment in high quality child care for children under the age of four and new investments in Head Start to make those programs a full school day and school year and expand access for infants and toddlers.

INCREASING SUPPORT FOR TEACHERS AND SCHOOL LEADERS

Our third priority is to provide support for teachers and leaders who are doing the hard, daily work of implementing new college- and career-ready standards and aligned assessments, turning around our lowest-performing schools, and using new evaluation and support systems to improve their practice. Teachers today do not have the support, opportunities, or autonomy they need to succeed.

Our 2016 request would provide significant new resources to address these concerns. First, we would build on the Teacher Incentive Fund through a \$350 million Excellent Educators Grants proposal that would support innovative approaches not only to compensation, but also to professional development, support, and career advancement. We also would support efforts to help expand the pipeline of effective teachers and principals through a consolidated \$139 million Teacher and Principal Pathways proposal. We would improve upon the Educational Technology State Grants program, providing \$200 million in State formula grants to help teachers and school leaders develop and test new ways to use technology to improve instruction and personalize learning. Finally, we would maintain strong support for the existing Improving Teacher Quality State Grants program, providing a steady \$2.3 billion in funding.

IMPROVING ACCESS, AFFORDABILITY, AND STUDENT OUTCOMES IN POSTSECONDARY EDUCATION

Our 2016 request would help make college affordable and help more Americans attain a college degree or certificate. While the total aid available to postsecondary students has grown dramatically over the past 6 years, helping to ensure that more students are graduating college than ever before, a significant opportunity gap remains. The 2016 request funds a signature initiative, America's College Promise, which would create a new partnership with States to make 2 years of community college free for responsible students, letting students earn the first half of a bachelor's degree and earn skills needed in the workforce at no cost. It also includes a \$30 billion investment in Pell Grants to protect and sustain its value for future generations by continuing to index it to inflation beyond 2017.

Another key discretionary request in this area is \$200 million for a proposed American Technical Training Fund to expand innovative, high-quality technical training programs that have strong employer partnerships and include work-based learning opportunities.

USING AND DEVELOPING EVIDENCE-BASED PROGRAMS

In recent years, the Department has pioneered several evidence-based programs and introduced priorities for the use of evidence into existing initiatives.

This Budget continues that commitment by increasing funding for programs that provide additional resources for interventions that are either based on evidence of success or help build evidence of what works in education. These programs build on approaches developed during the last Administration and work in partnership with the Institute for Education Sciences. The Budget requests \$300 million for the Investing in Innovation (i3) program for K-12 education, and \$200 million for First in the World for higher education. Within the latter program, there would be a 30 percent set-aside for Minority-Serving Institutions and HBCUs. The request also creates new incentives for the use of evidence in existing programs, ranging from the Leveraging What Works initiative for K-12 formula programs to targeted increases in the School Improvement Grants and the postsecondary TRIO programs. Finally, the Budget strongly funds the Institute of Education Sciences.

Already, our evidence-based initiatives have funded dozens of randomized control trials and other evaluations that build knowledge about what works. This knowledge can help all educators to help more students succeed.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, our 2016 request reflects the President's determination to make the investments necessary to secure America's future prosperity. I look forward to working with the Subcommittee to secure support for the President's 2016 Budget for education.