

**Congressman Jared Polis, CO-02**  
**Testimony before the House Committee on Appropriations Subcommittee on Labor,**  
**Health and Human Services, Education, and Related Agencies**  
**March 1, 2017 10:00am**

Chairman Cole, Ranking Member DeLauro, and members of the subcommittee, thank you for the opportunity to testify this morning.

In Congress, one of my top priorities is supporting public education. That support is rooted in my own experience as chair of the Colorado State Board of Education and as the founder of two charter schools in Colorado. This Congress, I'm honored to serve as ranking member of the subcommittee on Early Childhood, Elementary, and Secondary Education on the Education and Workforce Committee.

Education programs can't be successful without adequate funding. It would be impossible for me to highlight every education program and its impact in the time that I have today, so I'd like to highlight a few programs that are priorities for me and my district in Colorado.

I first want to speak in support of the federal **Charter School Program**. In the 2015-16 school year, public charter schools educated more than 2.9 million students in over 6,800 schools. Forty-three states and the District of Columbia have enacted charter school laws. Over half of the students served by public charter schools are eligible for free or reduced-priced lunch, over half are students of color, and 17 percent are Limited English Proficient—all higher percentages than those served in traditional public schools.

Public charter schools continue to grow and deliver outstanding educational options to students nationwide and, in particular, to low-income children. Since 2010, many research studies have found that students in charter schools do better in school than their traditional school peers. A 2015 report from the Center for Research on Education Outcomes (CREDO) at Stanford University found that charter schools located in our nation's largest urban districts are

showing significant positive performance impacts for the most disadvantaged students. Overall, students enrolled in urban charter schools gained 40 additional days of learning in math and 28 additional days in reading compared to their traditional public school peers. Separate studies by the Center on Reinventing Public Education and Mathematica Policy Research have found that charter school students are more likely to graduate from high school, go on to college, stay in college and have higher earnings in early adulthood.

Charter School Program funds are critical to continuing this success. CSP supports the launching of new charter schools, sharing successful innovations with other traditional public schools, and providing incentives to state governments and other stakeholders to provide school facilities. This committee has historically supported the Charter School Program through consistent annual increases. I encourage the committee to continue that investment in the next fiscal year by investing a minimum of \$350 million and up to \$700 million, which would fund charter school expansion plans and account for the more than one million students nationwide on charter school waiting lists.

The **Education Innovation and Research (EIR)** grant program, the successor to the Investing in Innovation (i3) grant program, was introduced during the Senate markup of the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) as a bipartisan amendment by Senators Hatch and Bennett, and it was adopted by voice vote. The EIR provision was modeled after the successful Small Business Innovation Research (SBIR) program that was created by Congress in 1982, reauthorized and expanded with overwhelming bipartisan support in 1992, 2000, and 2011, and is now funded at over \$2 billion per year across 11 federal agencies. EIR would apply the successful SBIR approach in the field of social spending.

Shifts towards the evidence-based use of federal funds hold great promise to both improve student outcomes and increase the return on federal education investments as more resources are spent on programs and practices known to make a positive impact rather than on those with no or unknown effects on student success. On June 7, 2016, the House Republicans' Task Force on Poverty, Opportunity, & Upward Mobility introduced "A Better Way" blueprint for reforming social programs, released by Speaker Ryan, which included support for tiered evidence programs, of which EIR is an example.

Early research has shown evidence that the i3 program, the successor to EIR, is working. A [report](#) by Patrick Lester, Director of the Social Innovation Research Center, released in January, found that many programs demonstrated positive effects in reading and literacy, kindergarten readiness, STEM (science, technology, engineering, and math), the arts, charter schools, distance learning in rural communities, college preparation, and teacher professional development.

Evidence-based programs should receive the highest attention and investment from the federal government, and I strongly encourage the committee to support adequate funding for EIR.

Finally, I would be remiss if I didn't reiterate my strong support for the programs that really are the crux of our country's education system. Those include Title I of ESEA and the Pell Grant Program, which support education for our nation's neediest students. I also want to reinforce my support for funding Title IV of the Every Student Succeeds Act, and specifically programs that support education technology, STEM, and computer science.

**HIV/AIDS**

In addition to education, I want to mention my strong support for programs that help provide adequate healthcare for individuals living with HIV/AIDS. Most notably, the Ryan White HIV/AIDS Program and the AIDS Drug Assistance Program, both housed at HHS, help ensure that individuals with HIV/AIDS receive the service they need. Importantly, both programs are critical towards a national effort to end the HIV/AIDS epidemic. I encourage the committee to continue to fund and strengthen these programs.

## **Labor**

Employee-owned companies provide major economic benefits to communities, employees and the businesses themselves. Companies that are structured in this manner, whether an ESOP or a cooperative, have higher rates of employee-retention, are able to weather market turbulence better than a traditionally structured company and have higher rates of job growth than other small businesses. Employee-owned companies include businesses like New Belgium Brewery in my district, Clif, Dansko and King Arthur Flour. These are anchor companies in their communities, providing well-paying jobs and benefits while giving employees an ability to actively engage in the management of the business to ensure profitability and corporate responsibility.

The Department of Labor shares regulatory oversight of ESOPs with the IRS, but does little to help businesses seeking to convert to employee-ownership structures. Labor could and should be doing more to support employee-owned businesses, which is why I am asking this Committee to include report language that would require the Department of Labor to work with IRS and the SBA to develop guidance and tools available to those interested in employee-ownership structures. Further, I ask the Committee to set-aside a portion of technical training money aimed at replicating effective strategies to states through the WIOA general technical

assistance program and support training centers that will aid in the creation of employee-ownership businesses.

Again, thank you for the opportunity to testify today. I look forward to working with each of you to ensure that each of these programs receive adequate funding in Fiscal Year 2018.