



OPENING STATEMENT

House Committee on Education and Labor

Chairman Robert C. "Bobby" Scott

House Committee on Education and Labor

Full Committee Markup

Build Back Better Act

Thursday, September 9, 2021 | 12:00 p.m.

Last month, the House passed a budget resolution for Fiscal 2022, which instructed 13 House Committees to write a proposal that would deliver a \$3.5 trillion investment that will transform our economy in ways that will make our nation more prosperous, equitable and fairer.

Today, we are marking up the Education and Labor Committee's portion of the Build Back Better Act, which makes historic and long-overdue investments in students, workers, families, and our economy. This package delivers on President Biden's Build Back Better Plan by:

- Lowering costs for working families,
- Helping American workers secure good-paying jobs, and
- Providing our nation's children a strong foundation that they deserve.

To start, this bill invests \$450 billion in lowering the cost of child care for working families and providing universal access to free, high-quality preschool. The high cost of child care is straining family's budgets and pushing millions of Americans out of the workforce – a majority of those are women. Lack of affordable child care is also hurting our economy, as employers are struggling to fill job openings to meet demand and grow their businesses. The Build Back Better Act is a historic step toward solving the child care crisis, while also providing all students access to a quality early childhood education.

The proposal before us also makes a \$111 billion investment to ensure that higher education is more affordable. Most jobs in the modern economy require some level of education past the high school level. Whether they choose to attend a community college or a four-year university, all Americans should have the opportunity to get the quality and affordable education they need to find a rewarding career.

This \$111 billion investment in higher education will make that a reality for millions of Americans by:

- Providing two years of tuition free community college,
- Increasing the value of Pell Grants, and
- Making targeted investments in Historically Black Colleges and Universities, Tribal Colleges and Universities, Hispanic-Serving Institutions, and other Minority-Serving Institutions to lower costs for students.

As our K-12 schools reopen this year, many students and educators are returning to crumbling and unsafe buildings that have asbestos, leaking roofs, lead pipes, and other safety hazards. The bill invests \$82 billion in repairing, modernizing, and rebuilding our nation's outdated school facilities and dedicates urgently needed resources to update public school infrastructure. In addition, this funding will ensure that we rebuild energy efficient and environmentally resilient public school facilities and ensure they are built to withstand extreme

weather events. By upgrading our school facilities, students will learn and teachers will teach in safer environments, while also helping to create more than a million good-paying jobs in communities across the country.

Creating millions of good-paying jobs is little help if we don't have the skilled workforce to fill those jobs. The bill provides nearly \$80 billion to strengthen our workforce development system to ensure Americans have access to the training and resources they need to find a good-paying job and advance in their career. Notably, the bill includes programs that will help train the next generation of workers to tackle climate-focused projects and address the direct care workforce shortage.

As part of the Build Back Better plan, workers' rights are strengthened with provisions to apply civil monetary penalties for labor law violations, and by updating the dollar amount of worker safety penalties so they are large enough to serve as an adequate deterrent.

Finally, this legislation invests \$35 billion to help prevent child hunger. This investment allows nearly 9 million more children to receive free school meals by expanding eligibility and eliminating paperwork, while also funding a nationwide program to help more children get healthy nutrition over the summer.

The *Build Back Better Act* is a historic investment in America's future that will lower costs for nearly every American family, help workers secure good-paying jobs, and provide America's children the strong foundation they deserve.

I urge all Members of the Committee to support the legislation. I am now pleased to yield to the distinguished Ranking Member, Dr. Foxx, for her opening statement.