

**Questions for the Record from
REPRESENTATIVE RAUL M. GRIJALVA**

Committee on Education and the Workforce

Full Committee Hearing:

“Examining the Policies and Priorities of the U.S. Department of Education”

Tuesday, May 16, 2023

10:15 a.m.

Representative Raul M. Grijalva (D-AZ)

Questions for Secretary Miguel Cardona

Title I

1. Secretary Cardona, the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) Title I is a vital program that helps to support children and youth living in poverty access a high quality education and meet challenging state academic standards. Title I funding supports an estimated 260,000 students living in poverty in Arizona and millions across the country. This funding is used to implement curricular interventions and programing that provide these students with the opportunity to seek a bright future. I’m concerned about the impact of proposed budget cuts that would slash services to our country’s most vulnerable students at a time when we need to be investing in them. Can you explain how proposed budget cuts would affect Title I programing?

Funding Cut

2. Secretary Cardona, access to a public education is a gateway to opportunity for millions of kids across the country. It is a mechanism for personal empowerment and social mobility. To ensure that this gateway is accessible to all kids, targeted programs provide support for vulnerable children, including those living in poverty, those experiencing homelessness, and those with disabilities. As you know, my Republican colleagues have proposed a 22% across the board cut to our federal budget. What programs would be cut as a result of this and what would the impact be, particularly in regard to our country’s most vulnerable children?

Middle School

3. Secretary Cardona, earlier this congress I introduced the Success in the Middle Act to better support the approximately 19 million young adolescents enrolled in the middle grades. This stems from a growing body of research that highlights the importance of focusing on this age group to address both lifelong educational and health outcomes. Neuroscience indicates that the majority of middle grade students are in a critical stage of brain development that promotes productive adulthood. Additionally, academic interventions at the middle grades level are most effective for addressing high school graduation rates, preparedness for college, and future achievement levels. Can you speak on the work that the Department of Education is doing to support middle grades students?

American Indian/Alaskan Native

4. Secretary Cardona, we know that American Indian and Alaskan Native populations were among the most academically vulnerable and under resourced groups even before the COVID-19 pandemic. And we know that the pandemic has disproportionately affected these populations.⁷
 - a. What steps has the Department taken to support American Indian/Alaskan Native students through the pandemic?
 - b. How does the Department work with the Bureau of Indian Education (BIE) to support American Indian/Alaskan Native students?

School Librarians

5. I'm concerned about the declining number of school librarians, and the declining percentage of schools that have a school library. 2.5 million students are enrolled in districts where there are no school libraries, 1 out of 10 schools in America don't have a library, and 30 percent don't have a full-time school librarian. We know that school libraries make a significant, positive impact giving kids the skills and inspiration needed to become proficient and enthusiastic readers. What can we do to ensure that all students have access to an effective school library? What is the Department doing to support school libraries and school librarians?

Book Bans

6. Mr. Secretary, I appreciate your leadership in speaking out about the growing problem of book bans. The American Library Association has been compiling data about library censorship for more than 20 years, and last year had the highest number of censorship reports on record. People tried to remove more than 2,500 different books from libraries around the country. Most of the targeted books were written by or about people of color and LGBTQ people. In addition to targeting individual books, there have been several proposals to expand censorship of library materials in state legislatures, and even in Congress. Mr. Secretary, in your view, why are book bans a problem, and what can we do about it?

Student Civil Rights

7. Mr. Secretary, your department is responsible for enforcing civil rights laws that protect students from discrimination. As book bans are proliferating across the country, we know that schools are disproportionately removing books by or about people of color and LGBTQ people from the reading choices in school libraries. From a civil rights perspective, and in terms of ensuring that all students can learn in welcoming and supportive environments, does this concern you?