



# Chairman Tom Cole

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

**Department of Education FY 2018 Budget Hearing**

**May 24, 2017**

**Opening Statement As Prepared**

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Good morning, Madam Secretary. It is my pleasure to welcome you to the Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human Services and Education. We are looking forward to hearing your testimony.

Madam Secretary, you have one of the most important jobs in Washington, and that is ensuring that all young people will have access to the education they need to be successful in the coming decades. Many of our schools do fantastic jobs, some need some support and others are in need of significant improvement. But one fact remains, and that is we need to do right for *all* America's children. And your job is to ensure that happens.

The budget blueprint that came out in March and was further detailed yesterday proposes some dramatic shifts in the way your agency does business. It has a goal of opening the doors for more educational choices to families, whether those schools be regular public schools, charter schools or private schools. I applaud your investment in high quality charter schools as a way to give options to many students who have no other options.

I support high quality educational options for all students, and I believe the neediest among us have the most to gain from an excellent education. I have long supported programs to help level the playing field for Indian children, disabled children, first-generation college students and poor children. Today I will have some questions about how your school choice proposals would work, and how they would mesh with the reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act that was just completed over a year ago, and was nearly a decade in the making.

I also appreciate that your budget aims to protect the most vulnerable populations—students with disabilities, English language learners, and minority serving institutions. It is unfortunate that the timing of the final consolidated appropriations bill and production of the full budget coincided such that final fiscal year 2017 budget figures were not known at the time your funding proposal decisions were finalized. In many cases, it is obvious that the policy of your Administration was to maintain current funding for a program, but Congress increased funding for the program after the fact, such that your proposal will appear to be cut, when in fact that is not your intention. We will simply need to carefully explain ourselves when discussing proposed increases and decreases today.

Your budget also shifts the way higher education student financial assistance flows, by proposing dramatic changes to the S-E-O-G and College Work Study programs. I look forward to learning more about how you believe these reforms will increase student access to, and completion, of college programs. Your budget consolidates and proposes over 20 programs for elimination. Many of these are cited as being duplicative, ineffective or not a key federal mission. I look forward to discussing those. And – your budget also proposes cuts to TRIO and GEAR UP, which I believe is short-sighted. I'll be interested to hear your rationale behind that.

I'll also have questions about your proposed funding levels for Individuals with Disabilities, particularly in light of the recent Supreme Court decision which found that schools must provide a meaningful educational opportunity to all children with disabilities, and not just a bare minimum level of services.

Finally, ultimately, this Subcommittee needs to know the specific details for how the cuts you propose would impact schools and students and how new programs would be implemented. The budget provides some of these details, and I know some are still being developed, but we look forward to hearing what you are able to share today.

As a reminder to the subcommittee and our witness, we will abide by the 5 minute rule so that everyone will have a chance to get their questions asked and answered.

Before we begin, I would like to yield five minutes to our Subcommittee Ranking Member, the Gentlelady from Connecticut, for an opening statement.

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