

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

Statement by Miguel Cardona Secretary of Education on the U.S. Department of Education Fiscal Year 2022 Budget Request

Good morning Chairwoman DeLauro and Ranking Member Cole.

I am pleased to join you today in my first appropriations hearing, and I am proud to testify on behalf of President Biden's fiscal year 2022 Budget Request for the Department of Education. I am especially happy to be testifying during Teacher Appreciation Week, and I would like to recognize all of the hard-working teachers across the country for their tireless dedication to students. The fiscal year 2022 Budget Request makes good on President Biden's campaign commitment to reverse years of underinvestment in Federal education programs and begins to address the significant inequities that millions of students—primarily students of color—and teachers confront every day in underserved schools across America. These inequities in opportunity and access continue to be experienced by students pursuing higher education and career and technical education credentials as well.

AMERICAN RESCUE PLAN ACT

Before I begin, I want to thank the Members of the Subcommittee—and your staff—who helped carry the American Rescue Plan Act to the finish line. I think we're all just beginning to realize that the battle against the COVID-19 pandemic is far from over, and I can tell you from immediate experience that the ARP funds will make all the difference in ensuring that schools re-open for full-time, in-person instruction as safely and soon as possible. In addition, ARP funds will enable schools to address the mental, social, and emotional needs of students that the pandemic has laid bare, and to fully recover from the massive impact of lost instructional time on student achievement and attainment during the pandemic.

The plans to reopen are bold – and will require coordination among key stakeholders at the Federal, State, and local levels. But they match the urgency the challenges before us demand. It’s important to remember that once we fully reopen schools, we still have work to do. Our job will not be done. Generations of inequity have left far too many students without equitable access to high-quality, inclusive learning opportunities. Education *can* be the great equalizer – it was for me – if we prioritize, replicate, and invest in what works for all students, not just some.

We must do more to level the playing field, including providing a strong foundation from birth, improving diversity among the teacher workforce, and creating learning pathways that work for all students. To that end, the fiscal year 2022 budget proposal for the Department of Education provides strong investments in key areas to ensure students of all ages have what they need.

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION FUNDING LEVELS

A little over 3 weeks ago, the President released a topline summary of his major discretionary proposals for fiscal year 2022 that call on Congress to invest nearly \$103 billion in Department of Education programs, an increase of almost \$30 billion, or 41 percent, over the fiscal year 2021 enacted level. More recently, the President released the American Families Plan, designed to support students from preschool to college to make sure their dreams become reality. I realize the discretionary proposals for fiscal year 2022 and the American Families Plan represent an unprecedented increase in Federal education funding, particularly coming on top of emergency appropriations over the past year to address the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on our schools. But these bold proposals also follow a decade of virtually no growth—in both nominal and real terms—in funding for Department programs.

Things have improved a little in the past 2 years, but we need to look at the recent fiscal improvements in context. The \$73.5 billion that Congress appropriated for the Department for the current fiscal year, fiscal year 2021, is about 8 percent more than the fiscal year 2011 total of

\$68.3 billion. Title I funding did a little better, up 10 percent, or 1 percent a year, over the same period of time. The total Federal investment in elementary and secondary education grew at the same rate—just 1 percent annually over the past 10 years—not even keeping up with inflation.

FUNDING INEQUITIES IN STATE AND LOCAL EDUCATION SYSTEMS

This underinvestment in education matters because of the dramatic and longstanding inequities in State and local education funding systems, which despite more than half a century of litigation and reform continue to provide significantly less funding for students from low-income backgrounds in underserved schools, particularly when those schools enroll high percentages of students of color. Reversing these funding inequities, as well addressing immediately the negative impact of those inequities, are critical goals of the Biden-Harris Administration's racial equity agenda, and the President's fiscal year 2022 request for the Department of Education makes a meaningful down payment toward these goals.

INVESTMENT IN TITLE I GRANTS TO LOCAL EDUCATION AGENCIES

The centerpiece of that request is a \$20 billion increase to more than double funding for the Title I Grants to Local Educational Agencies program. This increase would address longstanding funding disparities between under-resourced school districts and their wealthier counterparts, support teachers in Title I schools earning competitive wages, expand access to pre-K, and provide equitable access to rigorous coursework. The overall goal is to make good on the original promise of Title I, made by President Johnson in partnership with Congress back in 1965 as part of the War on Poverty, to help ensure that all students—especially students from low income backgrounds and students of color in underserved communities—receive the high-quality education they need to thrive and achieve their dreams.

INVESTMENT IN IMPROVING STUDENTS' PHYSICAL AND MENTAL HEALTH

Long before the COVID-19 pandemic there was increasing evidence that the conditions of poverty—especially concentrated poverty—take a tragic toll on the physical and mental health

of students. This warrants significant investments in mitigating the impact of this toll in order to improve student outcomes. Congress recognized this problem, in part, through the creation and rapid increase in funding for the Title IV-A Student Support and Academic Enrichment program, as well as the recent efforts by this Subcommittee, led by Chairwoman DeLauro, to expand the adoption and effective use of social and emotional learning strategies and interventions across a number of educational programs. Our request would build on these efforts through a \$1 billion investment to support the mental health needs of our students, including by increasing the number of counselors, nurses, and mental health professionals in our schools, and building the pipeline for these critical staff, with an emphasis on underserved schools.

COMMUNITY-BASED PROGRAMS

In addition, the President's request would help increase the availability of a broad range of wrap-around services to students and families in underserved schools and communities through a significant expansion of the Full Service Community Schools program, from \$30 million in fiscal year 2021 to \$443 million in fiscal year 2022. This program recognizes the role of schools as the centers of our communities and neighborhoods, and funds efforts to identify and integrate the wide range of community-based resources needed to support students and their families, expand learning opportunities for students and parents alike, support collaborative leadership and practices, and promote the family and community engagement that can help ensure student success. I know this Subcommittee includes strong supporters of the Full Service Community Schools program, including the Chairwoman, and I look forward to working with you to dramatically increase the reach and impact of this essential program.

Our request also would help strengthen communities by fostering diverse schools through renewed efforts to address segregation by race and class. We would provide \$100 million for competitive awards to help communities develop and implement strategies for building more diverse student bodies and improving opportunities and outcomes for students. Research

suggests that diverse learning environments benefit all students and can improve student achievement, serve as engines of social and economic mobility, and promote school improvement. Our proposal also would build evidence around effective practices for addressing the growing concern that our Nation's schools are becoming less diverse and more segregated each year.

SUPPORT FOR IDEA PROGRAMS

We also think it is past time for the Federal Government to make fully good on its commitment to students with disabilities and their families, as expressed in the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act. The President's request makes a significant move toward full funding of the IDEA with a \$2.6 billion, or 20 percent, increase for IDEA Part B Grants to States above the regular fiscal year 2021 appropriation, for a total of \$15.5 billion. Notably, this increase would raise the Federal share of the excess cost of serving students with disabilities for the first time in 8 years—demonstrating that IDEA has been yet another casualty of the Federal underinvestment in education over the past 10 years.

In addition, we would increase funding for the IDEA Part C Grants for the Infants and Families program by more than 50 percent, or \$250 million above the regular fiscal year 2021 appropriations, for a total of \$732 million to expand access to early intervention services for infants and toddlers with disabilities. In particular, we would pair this increased funding with reforms to increase access for underserved children, including children of color and children from low-income families, to services that have a proven track record of improving outcomes.

In addition to these historic investments in IDEA Parts B and C, the President's American Families Plan proposes to invest \$900 million over 10 years for the development of special education teachers under IDEA Part D.

POSTSECONDARY EDUCATION INVESTMENTS

Turning to higher education, our budget proposal would make postsecondary education more affordable for students with low incomes through a \$400 increase in the maximum Pell Grant. In combination with the \$1,400 increase proposed in the American Families Plan, the increase in 2022 would be the largest increase to the Pell Grant ever. These historic increases are also just a first step in a more comprehensive proposal to double the grant. Importantly, our proposal also would ensure that DREAMers—students enrolled in the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) program who came to the country as children—may receive Pell Grants if they meet current eligibility requirements.

The fiscal year 2022 request also would increase institutional capacity and student supports at Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs), Tribally Controlled Colleges and Universities (TCCUs), and Minority Serving Institutions (MSIs) such as Hispanic-Serving Institutions (HSIs), and other low-resourced institutions, such as community colleges. The discretionary request includes \$600 million in additional funding for programs serving these institutions, as well as related programs like TRIO and GEAR UP, to help ensure underserved students succeed in and graduate from college. The American Families Plan also provides historic mandatory investments over ten years in college access and success, including \$46 billion for HBCUs, TCUs, and MSIs, \$62 billion for evidence-based strategies to strengthen completion and retention rates at community colleges and institutions that serve students from our most disadvantaged communities, and \$9 billion to train, equip and diversify American teachers in order to ensure that our high school graduates are ready for success. Altogether, the American Families Plan provide \$108 billion in new funding to support students at HBCUs, TCUs, MSIs, and colleges serving students in most need.

ENFORCEMENT OF CIVIL RIGHTS LAWS

Finally, we would prioritize efforts to enforce the Nation's civil rights laws, as they relate to education, through a 10 percent increase for the Office for Civil Rights to protect students, providing a total of \$144 million to advance equity in educational opportunity and delivery at Pre-K through 12 schools and at institutions of higher education.

CLOSING REMARKS

We anticipate releasing the full President's Budget, which will provide greater detail on each of these requests as well as all other Department of Education activities, sometime in the next few weeks. Consequently, I am not able to provide significantly further information on the proposals I have described for you today. I do, however, look forward to hearing your reactions to this historic budget request, and to learning more about your individual interests and priorities related to Department of Education programs and activities. I am committed to working collaboratively with each of you, to the greatest extent possible, to help improve educational opportunities and outcomes for all students.

Thank you, and I will do my best to respond to any questions you may have.