

MEMORANDUM

TO: ASAHP Members

FROM: Kristen Truong

DATE: May 10, 2021

RE: House Appropriations Committee, Labor, HHS, Education, and Related Agencies Subcommittee Hearing on “FY 2022 Budget Request for the Department of Education”

May 5, 2021, 10 AM, Via Zoom

[\[HEARING LINK\]](#)

Overview:

The House Appropriations Committee, Labor, HHS, Education, and Related Agencies Subcommittee held a hearing on “FY 2022 Budget Request for the Department of Education” with testimony by Secretary Miguel Cardona. Republicans were not supportive of the proposed 41% funding increase by the Biden Administration, the 1619 Project, or cancelling student debt. Democrats focused their discussions on K-12 funding disparities, refinancing of student loans, mental health services, and CTE/workforce development. Overall, there was general consensus to support expansion of Pell and workforce development.

A Q&A summary is provided below with clickable links to the full transcript along with relevant external links.

Opening Statements Summaries

Subcommittee Chair Rosa DeLauro (D-CT) [\[Full Statement\]](#)

I am excited this morning to welcome Secretary Cardona who joins the Biden administration from my home state of Connecticut. I am grateful that President Biden took decisive action to respond to the economic crisis by proposing the American Rescue Plan, a plan that includes \$170 billion to help our K-12 schools, colleges, and universities safely reopen and to accelerate learning for students most impacted by the pandemic.

Further the administration initiated a bold plan to invest in American Jobs which includes \$100 billion to rebuild K-12 schools across the country, an additional \$12 billion investment in community college infrastructure. The cornerstone of the education and training system, especially for nontraditional and disadvantaged students.

And more recently, the President released the American Families Plan which includes groundbreaking proposals for universal pre-K, free community college, and a major increase to the Pell Grant program to make college more affordable for disadvantaged students.

The investments for universal pre-K would improve the lives of millions of children. Studies show that children attending universal pre-K programs do better academically in later grades and so I believe investing in pre-K plays a critical role in ensuring our students are equipped with the tools they need to succeed early on.

Let me though stress that these investments in Pre-K must go hand in hand with investments in child care. We can not afford to think of child care and Pre-K as separate systems. We must make sure that our investments in child care and pre-K keep working families in mind. Breaking pre-K out from the overall childcare umbrella could leave behind families who work beyond school hours, those with infants and toddlers, or those with students with disabilities. So I want to stress the importance of ensuring that we are also providing both educational and childcare services to our working families.

Mr. Secretary, your budget request for ED programs under the Labor-HHS-Education subcommittee is \$102.8 billion, an increase of \$29.3 billion over the current levels. I am also pleased to see that this administration is helping to increase the availability of wrap-around services to underserved students providing \$443 million, an increase of \$413 million for the Full Service Community Schools program. Since becoming Chair of this subcommittee, we have increased funding for community schools by 70 percent.

I would be remiss if I did not also thank you for the critical funding increases you are making for the IDEA Part B Grants to States, and for programs serving Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs), Minority Serving Institutions (MSIs), community colleges, and under-resourced institutions of higher education. I

applaud the investment you are making to make post secondary education. Making it more affordable for students with low incomes. In combination with the American Families Plan, this administration would provide an increase of more than \$1,800 to the maximum Pell Grant, the largest increase to Pell ever.

With that, I want to thank you again, Secretary Cardona, for joining us today, and I look forward to working with you.

Subcommittee Ranking Member Tom Cole (R-OK)

Good morning, Mr. Secretary. I want to welcome you to your first hearing before our subcommittee and I genuinely look forward to your testimony today. First, I'd like to start out by once again expressing concern regarding the total level of spending proposed by the administration. FY22 budget request will be this administration's fourth proposed trillion dollar plus package in less than barely a hundred days in office. The level of proposed spending is simply unnecessary, irresponsible and unacceptable. I've been a longtime supporter of helping achieve better outcomes for our students, but I've proposed 41 percent increase for the Department of Education in a single year.

I will leave the next generation saddled with the highest national debt our nation has ever seen. Average debt held by the national government per taxpayer is five times higher than average student loan debt. I believe we can do better than that for these futures and there are for these students and for our future.

I also believe in strong support for Pell Grant recipients. Pell grants help first generation college students chart a course with a better future into the middle class.

I'd like to see strong support for civic education, although there's some areas that I have concerns about that I'll be raising during my questions. I also believe we should do more to help underserved populations in underperforming schools, but an annual increase that is more than double the existing program does not strike me as a responsible or sustainable way to help these students.

I also hope we can restore the authority of the Appropriations Committee. The recent decision by the majority to pursue a partisan path of mandatory funding to pay for an extraordinary expansion of government should not be the new normal.

I want to thank you Mr. Secretary for coming forth today. I look forward to a future where we can meet once again in person. I genuinely look forward to getting to know you because my good friend, the chairman who spoke so highly of you on so many occasions and I know you'll make an outstanding Secretary. So while we will have areas that genuinely look forward to working with you and getting to know you and -- and welcome you before the set that Madam Chair I yield back.

Witness Testimony

The Honorable Miguel Cardona, Secretary, U.S. Department of Education [[Full Testimony](#)]

Q&A Summary

Subcommittee Chair Rosa DeLauro (D-CT)

- [Title I, K-12 funding disparities, and Maintenance of Effort](#)
- [NextGen and Interim Servicing Solution \(ISS\)](#)
- [Public Service Loan Forgiveness discharged only \\$95 million of \\$800 million provided](#)

Second round of Q&A

- [ACICS – for profit accreditor](#)
- [DoED's Office of English Language Acquisition ensure students are receiving support](#)
- [Utilize community schools for new learning opportunities and workforce development efforts](#)

Ranking Member Tom Cole (R-OK)

- [1619 Project/Civics Education](#)
 - [Link to Federal Registry notice proposing competitive priorities in civics](#)

Second round of Q&A

- [Tying distribution of money to re-opening schools full-time](#)
- [What standards/measures of transparency will be used to distribute America Recovery Act funds?](#)

Rep. Mark Pocan (D-WI)

- [Lack of oversight through the charter schools program](#)
 - [2018 Inspector General report: Nationwide Audit of Oversight of Closed Charter Schools](#)
- [Refinancing student loans to lower/current rate](#)
 - [Pocan's 2013 bill "H.R. 4622 Federal Student Loan Refinancing Act"](#)
- [Guidelines from DoED on spending the institutional portion of the American Rescue Plan](#)
- [Only fund eligible charter schools](#)

Rep. Andy Harris (R-MD)

- [Concerned about 1619 Project and Opportunity Scholarships in DC](#)
- [Teachers unions, CDC, and DoED discussions to re-open schools](#)
- [Transgender sports](#)

Second round of Q&A

- [Courtney report on student loans](#)
 - [WSJ article](#) – "Is the U.S. Student Loan Program Facing a \$500 Billion Hole? One Banker Thinks So."

Rep. Katherine Clark (D-MA)

- [Mental health professional shortage, especially in schools](#)
- [Discipline and policing in schools](#)
- [Early education with HHS](#)

Second round of Q&A

- [Biden's Executive Order directed to pursue comprehensive equity for all, especially people of color](#)
 - [Executive Order link](#)

Rep. Chuck Fleischmann (R-TN)

- [STEM opportunities and public-private partnerships in low income/rural communities](#)
- [STEM Master Teacher Corps authorized by ESSA – not yet funded](#)
- [Diversify STEM field – Girls Who Code](#)

Rep. Lois Frankel (D-FL)

- [Women lost majority of jobs due to the pandemic](#)
 - [Georgetown Center for Educational Workforce Report that 90% of traditional infrastructure jobs will go to men](#)
 - [Title IX – public comment phase](#)
 - [Flexibility on standardized testing](#)

Rep. Jaime Herrera Beutler (R-WA)

- [Learning loss due to pandemic disproportionately affected black, Latino, and low income students](#)
 - [McKinsey study: COVID-19 and student learning in the United States: The hurt could last a lifetime](#)
- [Department of Education needs to advocate for children](#)

Rep. Cheri Bustos (D-IL)

- [Teacher shortage/teacher residency – American Families Plan to support this](#)
- [Teacher salary](#)
 - Introduced [Retaining Educators Takes Added Investment Now Act](#)

Rep. John Moolenaar (R-MI)

- [What have we learned through remote/virtual learning to increase learning opportunities?](#)
- [Rural Broadband](#)
 - Introduced [BOOST Act](#)

- [Charter schools/public schools offer opportunities for innovation](#)
- [1619 project](#)

Rep. Bonnie Watson Coleman (D-NJ)

- [Civics programs](#)
- [New Jersey Abbott experience – resegregate schools for equity of education](#)
- [State schools re-opening plans sent by June - when will they have the resources to re-open?](#)

Second round of Q&A

- [Outcomes](#) of the [Summer Learning Collaborative](#) related to learning loss for minority students and mental health services

Rep. Ben Cline (R-VA)

- [Student debt – cancelling is not the solution. Federal government should not pick certain choices to pay for, as it does not include community college or apprenticeships](#)
- [Legacy loan defaults under Federal Family Education Loan Program](#)

Rep. Brenda Lawrence (D-MI)

- [Reintroduced Pell to Grad Act](#) extend student lifetime Pell grant eligibility to 16 semester, and can use Pell during undergrad education and then use the remaining eligibility for graduate degree.
- [Department's guidance for mental health services](#)
- [Black women carry the largest amount of student debt in America](#)

Second round of Q&A

- [In developing a skilled workforce, we need to look at Pell grants \(and other resources\) for those attending certified community college programs](#)
- [Mental health workforce](#)

Rep. Josh Harder (D-CA)

- [Create more opportunities for hands-on career education starting in elementary school, going on through high school and community college – focusing on partnerships with local industries to make sure that those students are learning locally relevant skill](#)
 - Introduced [Trades and Career Education Skills Package](#) last Congress and will reintroduce
- [Include Pell grants/funding for short-term, high quality programs/certificates](#)
- [Expose students to these CTE programs as early as possible](#)

Full Q&A

DELAURO: I'm pleased in your testimony to hear about \$20 billion for Title I, and addressing the funding disparities between under resourced schools, districts, and their wealthier counterparts. What is of concern to me is that 90 percent of K-12 education funding in this country comes from states and districts.

With just a handful exceptions, I'm concerned that most states do not sufficiently prioritize funding for high poverty districts and communities of color. Given the reality, how do you see the proposed \$20 billion increase to Title I improve the equity in--in--in state funding?

CARDONA: Thank you. Well, we know you know, the elements of this plan really serve to communicate the transformational impact that President Biden and the team want to have an education and really value the role that education plays in the growth of this country. So the Title I allotment really helps level the playing field by making sure that our schools, especially our students in greatest need, have additional resources to provide more reading instruction, more social emotional support for these students.

Providing them the intervention and support that they're going to need so that it could--education could be that equalizer for them. This targeted approach toward Title I, schools and programs really aim to make sure that when we're out of this pandemic and we're thinking about education in the years to come, we're making sure that all students have access to high quality opportunities, high quality instruction, additional support to be successful in school.

DELAURO: Thank you. And one of the things that we did in protecting high poverty districts from just proportionate state cuts, we included critical maintenance of equity provisions. And what I will do is for the record, I think, I'll send a question to you with regard to that issue of maintenance of--maintenance of effort. If I can, let me move to a student loan servicing crisis.

In 2017, the Trump administration Office of Federal Student Aid announced Next Gen. This was a promise to improve student loan servicing for borrowers into achieve cost savings for taxpayers \$277 million later in increases since 2017, three operating offices at FSA, the Trump administration and FSA failed to deliver on the promise the very moment. At the last moment, they attempted to create a new system, the Interim Servicing Solution, ISS, to correct the failure.

In a bipartisan rebuke of this effort, Congress instituted a 90 day pause on any award under the ISS solicitation. That pause expired in March of this year. My question is, where do you think stand with regard to the Next Gen initiative? Will you be moving forward with awards under the ISS solicitation?

CARDONA: Thank you. And you know, just to go--to go back, I do look forward to the question on record. But it is critically important that the maintenance of effort, maintenance of equity is a part of this. So we cannot be using funds to supplant. Our students need more, not less. They need more now. So we want to make sure that we're working with our states to ensure that they're doing their part as we do ours.

And with regard to your question, now, the Next Generation, you know, we do look forward to working on this. It is paused. We haven't made decisions yet about how we're moving forward. I can assure you that I agree wholeheartedly that we need to do more as an agency.

I'm thrilled that we brought on Richard Cordray, who's really known to be a consumer protection a guru. We need that level of advocacy and support for our students who are borrowing to go to college, and we need to keep the students at the center of the conversation.

So all these conversations are something that I'm really keenly aware is going to be critical to make sure that we're protecting our students, not our loan agencies. And I can assure you that I want to work with you and others to make sure that we're addressing those issues in a timely way.

DELAURO: Okay. And I might add that Congress has provided about \$800 million for the temporary expanded public service loan forgiveness program. That was intended to address the failures of the department and Student Services and administering the program. As of November 2020, the department has only discharged \$95 million in loans. What is the department going to do to ensure the funding is used as intended?

CARDONA: Thank you for the question. And similarly, I think what--we need to do better with public service loan forgiveness. About 98 percent have been rejected of the claims that put in. To me, this really needs a very critical look to make sure that the intention that you have in Congress is followed through on and that we're doing everything to put our students at the center of the conversation, make sure we're serving students.

So again, a lot of attention is going to be placed on this moving forward. We're bringing folks on board that have that mentality to make sure that we keep the students at the center of the conversation. We serve students, we have to make that very clear in our policies.

DELAURO: Okay. Thank you. Thank you very much, Mr. Secretary. Let me now yield to Congressman Cole.

COLE: Thank you very much, Madam Chairman. And again, welcome, Mr. Secretary. It's good to have you here. I have some big questions I want to ask you, but I've got something that's important to me personally. It's smaller and more targeted and want to give you an opportunity to respond.

I know that you and I and certainly the chairwoman agrees our nation's students need more and better (OFF-MIC) education. I'm deeply concerned by a federal register notice published last month by your department

proposing competitive priorities for the national programs and civics. That proposal actually triggered just a blizzard, at least in my office, of bipartisan, I want to stress bipartisan, critical response. It's effectively, in my view, jeopardizing civics as a bipartisan priority, and potentially jeopardizing a piece of legislation the Chairwoman and I have worked on together for a long time.

Specifically, the federal register notice references the 1619 Project and the work of a controversial scholar. These references of politicized civic education, whether intentionally or unintentionally, and created an impression that the administration cannot be trusted to promote civic education in a bipartisan unideological way.

Civics education, in my view, ought to heal what divides our country and this proposal, in my view, exacerbates that. In light of those concerns, would you, number one, explain the reference, if you're familiar with it, which I expect you are, and then can--would you consider withdrawing the proposal pending further consideration?

CARDONA: So thank you for the question. You know, it's--I came from the local district level. I was fortunate to serve as Commissioner of Education in Connecticut, and curriculum decisions are made there with local control, with input of local stakeholders and the community there, and that's where it should stay.

The Education Department does not mandate curriculum, nor does it mean one way or another. What it does do is provide parameters that are going to have to be submitted. Clarity, so that those who are submitting grants can submit. Did you want to speak, Chairwoman DeLauro?

COLE: Yeah. Well, again, I appreciate that. But I--

CARDONA: --No, I think Chairwoman DeLauro is going to ask someone to mute.

DELAURO: Yes. If I can, please, we're trying to--whoever is unmuted, please mute so that we can hear the testimony and the questions.

CARDONA: So, Congressman Cole, I'm going to be quick because I see your time is ticking. But I do feel--listen, I've been an educator for over 20--22, 23 years. It's critically important that our educators have a voice in developing curriculum because we know that curriculum should serve as a window and a mirror and a sliding door into their own experiences and other experiences, as Dr. Rudine Sims Bishop has taught us in education.

So, curriculum does a lot more. What it does is engage students. And students should always see themselves in curriculum as well. So, I welcome seeing states come up with creative ideas on how to have students be seen in their curriculum, but do so in a manner that builds community. Educators can do that. We can build community under one flag by doing this, and I have complete confidence in the educators across the country that they can get it done.

COLE: Us too. I used to--one of my sons is a public school teacher, so--and I appreciate your remarks, by the way, honoring our teachers.

But, you know, I am worried when it's something--and I agree with your statement. We should not be dictating curriculum at the federal level. That's not our role. It's not our responsibility. But when I see grand standards laid out in the 1619 Project, which, you know, we can discuss at length, but it's very controversial, and I see a scholar--respected scholar, I'm sure, but again, controversial spot. Those are sort of laid at--the oppression left is, okay, we want a particular version or a particular kind of civics taught, and we're dictating.

And I'm--again, I've had these people contact me. I think you had 37 senators write you about this, across the political--it's not--it's not actually that Democrats that are interested in civics education putting this--also raise this issue.

So, I don't have a lot of time left. I certainly want to give you a chance to respond and I certainly would welcome a further dialogue about it. But I really want to flag this, because I can tell you, you know, the political

opposition to what I consider a partisan bill and something we ought to be working on is growing, and it's growing across the political spectrum. And that registry notice has a lot to do with sparking this off.

CARDONA: Thank you. Thank you, Ranking Member Cole. I appreciate your perspective. And I can assure you that I do want to work with you and others to listen to the different perspectives. And let me just underscore, you know, our educational system--yes, we have a divided country, but our education system is going to unite us. Again, the goal here is to really build community, have students engaged in their learning, and grow together. But thank you for your comments.

COLE: I agree with you and I understand with this. But that registry notice did not--it's doing quite the opposite. So, I would just ask you to review that. And I would look forward to a further dialogue with you about it, because I don't want to lose a good piece of legislation and I think we're going to over this issue.

With that, Madam Chair, thank you. You've been very indulgent with me. I yield back, and look forward to talking to you about other things, Mr. Secretary.

CARDONA: Thank you, sir. Thank you.

DELAURO: Congressman Pocan?

POCAN: Thank you very much, Madam Chair. And thank you, Mr. Secretary. It's a pleasure to meet you virtually. I also serve on the Ed and Labor Committee in addition to this subcommittee, so I've got the feeling we'll be working together a lot.

I like to try to get to three subjects, so I'm going to ask the questions right away and, if you can give answers so I can get to three subjects in five minutes, I'd appreciate it. You know, we know that our public schools have been underfunded, especially Title I and IDEA programs, and that's hurt many kids' educational opportunities. I'm very glad to see the significant investment in the Fiscal Year '22 budget.

But while we don't have our full budget, I want to discuss my concerns about the lack of oversight on the hundreds of millions of dollars distributed by the department through the charter schools program.

Between 2006 and 2014, of the 4,829 schools that got charter school grants, 37 percent of those schools never opened. Eleven percent opened and then closed. And it's a large percent of schools. I might be giving the wrong percent on that second one. I'm sorry. But we--we've had a large percent of schools that have had--had this happen. The amount of funding estimated to have been given to those schools is close to \$500 million.

The IG looked at this and they said that the department did not include charter school closure in risk assessments when they were based--basing oversight and monitoring decisions, and the closure process lacked oversight and the risk of significant fraud, waste, and abuse of federal program fund is high. I'd just like to talk to you about if you're willing to commit to review that--previous inspector general reports and implement their recommendations.

CARDONA: I am interested in making sure that we're holding folks accountable for the funds that they get and ensuring that all students get a good education, including in charter schools, that--that the money is being used for what it's intended, and that our students are getting a good return on investment.

And speaking of support and oversight, I want to just quickly knowledge two folks that are in the room with me, Larry Keene and Donna Harris-Aikens, for their support in preparation for the materials today; didn't want to leave that out.

POCAN: Right. So, you will be looking at those reports and you will be implementing the recommendations?

CARDONA: I will be reviewing the reports. And I'd be happy to discuss further with you further steps, but I will be reviewing the reports. Thank you.

POCAN: Great. Also on student debt, you know, I introduced a bill back in 2013 of--a number of people have done it since then, to try to allow the refinancing student loans. We know the burgeoning debt is huge, about \$1.57 trillion.

You know, right now some people are still paying like 6 percent or a mixture of different loans. It's not easy to consolidate to get rid of those rates. Rates are historically low. Is there any way that you would look at and support the effort to be able to refinance your student loans at a lower rate, perhaps the lower--whatever the current rate is, so that we could help relieve some of that additional burden?

CARDONA: Thank you, congressman, for that. We really have to have a very broad look at how we're serving--how we're servicing students and how our policies are creating obstacles for students.

I'm really eager to make sure that once Rich Cordray gets on board and we have our undersecretary that we really revisit all strategies, including those, to make sure we're giving the students the best opportunity to be successful and go through college without having a huge debt burden when they graduate.

So, nothing is off the table. Yes, I am interested in looking at ways to provide easier opportunities for them to make college affordable.

POCAN: Yeah, I appreciate that. And I think this is really one of the easiest lifts that are out there. It's a bipartisan legislation that's out there. But, you know, as you know, bills don't pass Congress these days too often. So, anything the department could do in this area would certainly be appreciated.

I've had a request from some universities in my district. When will the department issue guidelines on spending the institutional portion of the American rescue bill plan? You know, they're just trying to get some idea of when you might provide some of that.

CARDONA: They've been very patient. And, you know, I respect their--the need for them to have this information. As you know, there's a vetting--there's different vetting processes and comment portions that have to--we have to go through. But I'm pleased to share that I think within the next two weeks they're going to be getting information on that.

POCAN: That's awesome, Mr. Secretary. Thank you. And since you have been very brief, I can get to one more question.

CARDONA: Good.

POCAN: There is an issue back on charter school programs. You know, I've been in the legislature for 14 years before I came to Congress, on my fifth term. I've seen some of the worst, you know, in these programs. I think a lot of public dollars get wasted. There was a program, the Charter Management Organization, an ID--IDEA charter school that received \$100 million in awards.

The school was ruled ineligible by the department staff, and yet the secretary at the time apparently appealed that and let another \$1 million dollar grant go out in 2020 and a total of \$72 million over five years for the replication and expansion of high-quality charter schools. Would you commit that the charter schools who are determined to be ineligible by the department for a grant cycle don't receive funds?

CARDONA: I'm going to look at that further. But, yes, I think if they're not eligible, I think I'd be hard-pressed understand why we're funding.

POCAN: Okay. I appreciate it. Thank you. I yield back, Madam Chair.

DELAURO: Thank you. Congressman Harris?

HARRIS: Thank you very much. And welcome, Mr. Secretary. You know, as someone who's been on a faculty for 30 years in the past, I appreciate, you know, your experience in education as well.

Let me bring up a couple of issues, first just to reiterate what Ranking Member Cole said. You know, I'm also concerned about the 1619 Project working its way into some kind of federal curricula. I urge you to look--there's a Wall Street Journal piece written last year by Ms. Latasha Fields, a Black American from Chicago, who--and the article is entitled God, Parents, and the 1619 Project. I'd just urge you to consider that and read that before you consider in any way adopting the 1619 Project into any federal curricula.

Now, I also want to follow up on some of the questioning from your confirmation hearing over in the Senate. Mr. Scott, Senator Tim Scott, who I think represents the feelings of many people who are--who feel that the education system is failing them, asked you about the OSP program, the Opportunity Scholarship Voucher Program in Washington, DC.

You were noncommittal at the time in the beginning of February. I'd like to know if you have looked into it more and if now you are--in fact support the idea of the opportunity scholarships in--in Washington, DC.

CARDONA: Yes. Thank you. So, we are looking into that. I am getting more information. You know, I want to make sure that there--there's a need, there's an interest in order to support it. I certainly want to protect the learning opportunities of those students that already are in it. Obviously, we'll make sure we allow those students not to have additional disruptions in their programs.

But, yes, we are still looking at what the need is and what the demand is to then make decisions about how to fund it.

HARRIS: Well, Mr. Secretary, you know, this is a subject I've been interested in for years. There is a waiting list for those. There are lotteries for those. How do you question the need or demand? I mean, your people at the Department of Education haven't told you that in fact there is always more need and demand than in fact available funding?

CARDONA: Well, again, meeting with my staff, I will find out more information, more specifics. But there's also been, you know, some question about the funding that goes to it and whether the demand is there for that funding.

HARRIS: Well, we'll follow up.

CARDONA: Interested to--

HARRIS: --We'll follow up--

CARDONA: --Yeah--

HARRIS: --with you, because my time is short.

You know, of great concern to me is the revelation in the last few days that the CDC was in communication with teachers unions to develop the medical guidelines for school reopening. Now, teachers unions have a lot of teachers in them. I don't think they have a lot of doctors in them. And I think that decision should be made on scientific-medical basis. But of interest is that Ms. Psaki, in a--in press conference the other day, said that the administration is going to involve, of course, the CDC, but they would--will involve the Department of Education in coming up with the CDC guidelines.

So, I want to know very briefly, have--are you in contact with the teachers unions and in--in contact with the CDC and somehow communicating teachers unions' demands to CDC using the education department?

CARDONA: Absolutely not. I do feel that my success in Connecticut with reopening schools was through a good, thorough partnership with our educators, our leaders, and then having conversations about how to safely reopen schools.

It does involve a very strong connection with CDC and our health partners, but also enclose--includes looking at what the needs are in the building, because ventilation and things like that that are grossly under resourced-

HARRIS: --I understand that. But just to--

CARDONA: --Should also be taken into account.

HARRIS: Just to get it straight, so you have not had email communication or other communications with the teachers unions about the CDC reopening requirements going into the future?

CARDONA: Correct.

HARRIS: Okay. Thank you. So, the--with regard--so, with regard to reopening schools, I think medically I think there's pretty clear indication that that is a--that that's something that should proceed, probably should have proceeded a while ago. And I appreciate that--that you did that--just that in Connecticut.

Now finally, I want to close following up on what Senator Rand Paul and Senator Romney asked you about, which is a topic of great interest to me, as a daughter who is an NCAA All-American athlete. The testimony you gave in the Senate indicated that you actually support biological boys competing with girls in school sports. So, I just want to get you on the record. This is the House side. That was the Senate side. Is that true?

CARDONA: Thank you, Dr. Harris, congratulations to your daughter. I'm going to be very clear, and thank you for the opportunity--

HARRIS: --And I--listen, I want to thank you for that, because there's no way she could compete against biologic males.

CARDONA: Thank you.

HARRIS: She would never have gained All-American status, but I'm--I await your answer.

CARDONA: Thank you. Yeah, and I--there's no way that I wouldn't support all students in our country to have opportunities to engage in school activities, which include extracurriculars. So, as I said then, I'll say it again--

HARRIS: --The question specifically is--

CARDONA: --Trans students are--

HARRIS: --Should--biological boys should be competing with biological girls. That's a very specific question. I understand. We can create transgender leagues. I don't mind. Should biological boys be competing with biological girls?

CARDONA: As I said then, I'll say again transgender students deserve every opportunity to participate in all school activities.

HARRIS: And I will take that as including to compete against biological girls. I'm disappointed. I yield back, Madam Chair.

DELAURO: Congresswoman Clark?

CLARK: Thank you so much, Chairwoman DeLauro. Welcome, Secretary. We are thrilled to have you. And I just want to start by thanking you for your last answer and for standing up for equality for every single one of our kids.

I want to specifically ask you to start off about the serious shortage of mental health professionals. I am so pleased to see a billion dollar request to increase the number of those professionals in school settings, but I'm interested in how--if you have thought about strategies as secretary of education for increasing and addressing the shortage of mental health professionals overall as we are looking to increase them in our schools.

CARDONA: Thank you, Congresswoman Clark. So, you know, I--I'll start by saying when I visited--in the last month, month and a half, I visited about nine states and 10 different schools, and one thing that came out loud and clear is the need for our schools to look different than they were prior to March 2020.

And one of those differences is the need for better social emotional supports, better mental health supports. Our students are in greater need there. So your question is a very good one. How do we create the capacity there? How do we look to connect our K12 institutions with our institutions of higher education to make sure that we're preparing enough professionals to fill the demand that we have in our schools to meet the social emotional needs of our students?

So we need to be creative about creating pipeline programs, ensuring that our students have pathways in our K12 systems to get into the higher education space around that social emotional support or degrees in school counseling, social work. That's critically important. Not only do we have to rethink our organizational structure for our schools but we also have to create clear pipelines for our students who are in school now to think of themselves as future mental health professionals.

CLARK: Thank you so much for that, and for your emphasis on it. And we know this has been a time that has really inflicted great trauma from, you know, and as always even more so on low-income children and children of color.

We look at nearly 40,000 children in this country have at--have lost at least one parent and black children account for 20 percent of those kids. And we know that trauma is at the base of sometimes behavioral issues at school. And the previous administration rescinded Obama era guidance on disciplinary practice that warned schools they may be violating federal civil rights if one racial group was overrepresented in disciplinary actions taken.

As secretary of Education, will you restore that guidance on school discipline and update it to address policing in schools?

CARDONA: Yeah, I remember been an assistant superintendent when I read that. And was shocked. Because our efforts were really to try to reduce disparities and exclusionary practices. We know students of color, students with disabilities are targeted differently. And discrimination of any form is unacceptable, including of our LGBTQ and trans students. So yes, this is a high priority for me to make sure that all students have a fair shake. Yes, we're gonna make sure that accountability is there.

We're gonna make sure that education and support to our systems are there. And that's what this American Families Plan and American Rescue Plan can do. Training to help our educators understand the differences of what trauma looks like and what poor behavior looks like. So that we can meet the needs of our students where they are, especially after this pandemic.

With regard to your question about school resources and--school resource officers in schools, listen, this was one that I'm gonna need more information.

I've seen examples of where it's very helpful to have members of the school community in the school helping the learning happen, including police officers, resource officers. But I've also seen examples where it worsens the disparities and exclusionary practices. So more to come on that but I definitely wanna hear more.

CLARK: And in my few remaining seconds, we are--I cannot tell you what it means to have an Administration that understands the value of early education. Most of that funding and oversight resides in HHS. If you could just briefly tell us how we can support your work and collaboration around early Ed with Health and Human Services.

CARDONA: Thank you. You know, the research and the practice around early childhood education is--there's a huge gap there. And for us it's really about making sure we're creating that culture of understanding of how important early childhood education is in our country for our young learners. We know students that have access to high quality instructional programs at their early ages do better in high school, they get honors courses, their potential for college is greater.

So continue to beat that drum with us. Make sure that we're supporting programs that have high quality and making sure that we--as the money ge(PH)--makes its way to the states that they're being invested in high quality programs. That's how you can support. Thank you.

CLARK: Thank you. Thank you, Madam Chairwoman.

DELAURO: Thank you. Congressman Fleischmann.

FLEISCHMANN: Thank you, Madam Chair. Mr. Secretary, congratulations--Secretary. I do wanna briefly acknowledge that this is National Teacher Appreciation Week. I hope you and my friends on both sides of the dais will acknowledge our great American teachers and their great efforts.

Mr. Secretary, in my previous efforts on this subcommittee for years I've worked in conjunction with colleagues across the aisle and with outside stakeholders to provide STEM education opportunities to rural and low income communities. Most recent data shows that 3.5 million STEM related jobs will need to be filled by 2025 in order to maintain a stable workforce. It is imperative that we continue to support public private partnerships to close the skills gap and cultivate a diverse workforce.

My first question, sir. As we begin to reopen schools how do you believe Congress could help in your efforts to increase STEM and computer science education in low income and rural communities? And what is the administration doing to promote public private partnerships in this area, sir?

CARDONA: Thank you for that question and you're absolutely right. I think if there's anything that stood out in topics that I've had conversations with elected officials at the state and at the national level, it's the need for us to do more there. I really feel we need to evolve our system, to make that clearer pathways into the workforce a reality for students starting in middle school.

And, you know, I have had experience on a workforce council where we brought our workforce partners, our CEOs around the table with higher education with our K12 leaders to come up with strategies to make sure that we have sustainable plans to do that. And I look forward as secretary of Education to really moving the needle on that.

I'm really passionate about that. I think that has to blend K12 expertise with higher education expertise with workforce partners. So you're absolutely right. We need to listen to our workforce partners but have them have a seat at the table when we're planning, because regionally really is where we can get the most bang for our buck.

When we know what the needs are regionally, we can make internship experiences together, we can develop curriculum with our partners in the workforce. There's a lot of room for growth there in this country and I look forward to leading that.

FLEISCHMANN: Thank you. And as a follow up to that, Mr. Secretary, I'm sure you're aware the STEM Master Teacher Corps was authorized by the Every Student Succeeds Act but has not yet been funded. I would just respectfully request that the Administration work with my friends in--in both Houses, in both parties to fund that. A follow up question sir. Girls Who Code reported around 74 percent of middle school girls express interest in STEM, yet only 0.4 percent of high school girls choose to pursue these interests in college.

In order to diversify the personnel how can we better monitor girls who are already interested in STEM, sir?

CARDONA: That's a great question and it shows how our K12 system needs to evolve to the needs of our communities. And if they're interested in it early in their education career how are we losing them and--by the high school years? So we have to do a better job connecting our female students out into the field, looking at job potential, looking at career pathways earlier. We have to be more assertive, more aggressive, ensuring that they understand that these options exist for them as well.

We should also bring in mentors that are in the STEM field to come in and talk to our students and create programs intended not to have that slide off. So, you know, that's--that--you're highlighting work that I'm pretty passionate about and I look forward to doing as Secretary of Education.

FLEISCHMANN: Thank you. Mr. Secretary, Secretary Cardona, in closing I just wanna say that many of these STEM programs do require in person lab classes. I hope that you will work with us with the Administration to diligently, safely reopen our schools and our economy. And Madam Chair, I thank you and I yield back.

CARDONA: Thank you.

DELAURO: Congresswoman Frankel.

FRANKEL: Thank you, Madam Chair. Thank you, Mr. Secretary, for being with us today. I have a comment and then I have--I do have some questions. I--I'm sure you're aware that women have really suffered the brunt of the economic harm of this pandemic, losing the majority of jobs. This week the Georgetown Center Educational Workforce released a report that 90 percent of traditional infrastructure jobs go--will go to men.

So I just wanna urge you in your conversations with the president and the vice president and others that you not only advocate for the inclusion of women in traditional infrastructure jobs but really emphasize the importance of investing and creating and improving the pay for new childcare slots, elder care, and especially the early education which I know is in your area. And thank you. We're hoping you'll be a good advocate for us.

Question. We know that there--that the issue of sexual violence on campuses ha--has been a significant health issue. Unfortunately, many of us believe that the pa--last Administration took us backwards in terms of keeping sexual violence--diminishing it on campus. It's because of the change in Title IX rules. Can you give us an update where your department is in the process of rescinding those rules and issuing new guidance that actually protects vi--victims and survivors?

CARDONA: Thank you, Congresswoman Frankel, first of all for your comment. You're absolutely right. You know, when we talk about the inequities that were in--exacerbated by this pandemic women have had a harder time recovering from this because in many cases it's affected their jobs.

And when we talk about childcare and the needs there, the American Families Plan hopes to address that. But I absolutely agree with you that as we're thinking about recovery as a country we need to continue to make sure that we're providing opportunities for jobs for women as well.

With regard to you--the question that you asked about Title IX, you know, part of this process--and we're looking forward to having information as soon as possible because I know folks are waiting for it. But we're--where we are in the process now is in the listening phase. As you know, public comment is critically important

for us to make sure that whatever we put forth takes into account the needs and the concerns expressed by those we serve. So we are in that process and that's a very important part of the process.

Once we're done with that we look forward to moving quickly to make sure we have guidance out there. Because like you, I agree that sexual discrimination or any type of harassment has no place in our--in our college campuses.

FRANKEL: Mr. Secretary do you actually have proposals that are being commented on?

CARDONA: There is a comment period now that--that is taking place. Yes.

FRANKEL: Thank you. And I know during the pandemic there's--there was a flexibility on standardized tests and so forth. So what--we've heard some--from some teachers who think that their--these flexibilities should continue. Do you have an op--a--a comment on that? Is the administration going to try to extend those flexibilities?

CARDONA: Thank you. Yeah. So the issue of assessing students at this point in the pandemic is a really tough one. It reminds me of the decision we had to make last July about reopening schools. There is no one way of doing it that worked for everyone. With that said, as we're--as we're thinking about how to distribute \$130 billion in the American Rescue Plan to our schools any little bit of data helps. So that I can ensure that we're closing equity gaps through those funds, right?

So if this group of students was hit harder I wanna make sure that more funds go there. But I know teachers across the country don't need a standardized assessment to tell them how their students are doing. There's not one teacher that needs that to tell them how their students are doing. They know.

With that said, when we're making policies or we're--when we are distributing millions and millions of dollars it helps to know which communities need double the money so that when I see resources being used to make class sizes of nine in one class where other classes may have 20, I understand that based on the--how the students performed over the impact of the pandemic.

So I recognize it's not an easy one. And then moving forward, cause your question was about extending them, I hope to have robust conversation about how to evolve our assessments to make sure they measure what they're supposed to measure.

FRANKEL: Thank you, Mr. Secretary. Yield back, Madam Chair.

DELAURO: Thank you. Congresswoman Herrera Beutler.

HERRERA BEUTLER: Thank you, Madam Chair. And thank you, Mr. Secretary. You know, a little bit in that question obviously throughout the pandemic we have heard--I've heard from parents non-stop who have struggled to help their kids during the remote learning. And whether it was, you know, we're seeing incredibly scary increases in mental health challenges and suicidal either ideation or attempts, and--to just learning loss.

You know, I was looking at a McKinsey study from the end of last year talking about, you know, learning loss experienced by black students was about 10.3 months. Latino--well, they say LatinX and I'm just--that's a personal thing.

I hate the term LatinX as someone of Latin descent. So Latino students, 9.2 months. And students from low-income backgrounds from 12.4 month. Could--and that was at the end of last year. Could be even greater.

And I thought it was really interesting, the Seattle Times has been following obviously the school closures issue significantly in--in that, like, some--I think it was just last year--last week Seattle teachers finally came back into the classroom after the governor, the Democratic governor announced that we could reopen schools months ago.

And he even put teachers near the front of the line with regard to getting vaccinations, recognizing you need to make sure they're safe if you're asking them to go back into the classroom.

All of those things I applauded. However, the story that I just found talks about how basically those districts that primarily serve white children in districts and counties where a majority of them voted for our previous president, reopened more quickly to students than the more liberal-leaning or racially diverse communities.

And interestingly it didn't always follow health indicators like the analysis found that the counties with the highest COVID death rates had a higher average proportion of students in classes than the rest of the state meaning that the death or the CDC recommendations didn't always get taken into account when they were deciding how to put kids back in schools.

And I really wanted to see, you know, in light of this learning loss especially among our most vulnerable especially among those that the whole public education system in my mind is really geared towards like that's the goal is that no child is less than any other child so how do we make sure we catch them up?

What is your--is your department more aggressively pursuing making sure that, you know, one day a week is not good enough for some of these kids and some of these districts, and again I noted our Democratic governor has really stepped up to the plate to say you need to do this and yet they are still not complying.

How are you going to take on some of those bigger, more intransigent systems that are not geared toward the kids' best needs?

CARDONA: Thank you for the back question, and I appreciate the way you laid it out. I agree with you wholeheartedly. The best equity lever we have is in-person learning now, not the fall, now and we need to do everything to get our students in, every day that they are not in the classroom is a day wasted to have social-emotional engagement, to have that access to a teacher, a caring school environment whereas you mentioned at the beginning of your comments we know students are suffering due to the trauma that they have experienced. They need to be in the classrooms.

What we've done is, you know, work with our partners at CDC to get--to get guidance. We had the Reopening Schools Summit, we have over 1100 entries of best practices that were submitted. We have a clearinghouse with about 200 practices that districts could learn from one another, but we are also building up a system very quickly to get new data to make sure that we are reaching out proactively talking to the governors, talking to the commissioners, talking to the superintendents, if necessary, sending a team over there to support them because we can't wait.

So I am very passionate about that. I agree with you wholeheartedly. We need to get the students in right away. Unfortunately, though, what I have seen in my tour is some of these urban centers have buildings that are 120 years old that haven't had a ventilation system looked at in years, so there's a lot of disparate need that we need to address, but I do appreciate your passion and I share it with you.

HERRERA BEUTLER: My goodness. Always when it's my--

CARDONA: It's awesome. I love it. This is the education budget, so it's very appropriate.

HERRERA BEUTLER: Well, the other piece of that I just can't get over is that I feel like it really is the most vulnerable who are going to pay this price while we are protecting every other institution in--in the system of education, and it frustrates me that we put a lot of money, we send billions of dollars to the states to help with this to help with upgrading HVAC systems and to hear people not take advantage of those, we could send all of the money in the world there unless there is some sort of teeth I think those kids are going to continue to pay and I want to understand that you've got their back even though over some of the adults in the system.

CARDONA: Exactly, and thank you for sharing that, and I want to continue to have conversations with you about where--you know, what you are seeing, what you are hearing, but I cannot agree anymore. We need to advocate for children here; we need to keep students at the center of the conversation.

You are absolutely right; some kids are being hurt more than others. We need to be aggressive about reopening now providing whatever supports they need, so support and accountability have to be equal here, and I totally agree with you. The plans that the states are providing within the next couple, three weeks must include how they are going to address equity and how they are going to engage stakeholders. We need to get our kids back right away.

HERRERA BEUTLER: Thank you for that. I appreciate it, Madam Chair.

DELAURO: Thank you. Congresswoman Bustos?

BUSTOS: All right, thank you, Madam Chair and Mr. Secretary great to see you again. I do want to publicly thank you for visiting Illinois last month with the first lady. It was really good to have you at Sauk Valley Community College.

Today if I may, I would like to talk a little bit about teacher shortages. I gave you a little handout when you were in our region that went over a little bit about this, but the American Families Plan just so great to see that President Biden is requesting doubling the yearly teach grant award from \$4000 to \$8000 and that is for students who commit to teaching a high need to subject in a high poverty school district for four years. I think it is terrific, so thank you.

I also want to applaud the \$2.8 billion for Teacher Residency Programs and the \$1.6 billion for grants teachers to obtain additional certification. So that plays into helping to address teacher shortages major, major problem in my home state of Illinois, where right now, as we are having this conversation, school districts have about 4200 unfilled positions.

You know think about that, shortage of teachers, of paraprofessionals, of other licensed staff in my congressional district that I serve we have 400 vacant positions and that--that is a lot. So if you could talk a little bit about the American Families Plan and how that will impact addressing this teacher shortage issue.

CARDONA: Sure. And first off, let me say Sauk Valley gets it right. If you want to see an example of how a community college can lift a community and provide pathways for careers that exist now visit Sauk Valley. It's like a commercial. I really I am smiling because it was one of the best methods I have had. Thank you for what you are doing over there, and thank you, Sauk Valley, for what you are doing.

You are absolutely right, teacher shortages, but you know we could throw money there, but I think what I want--I don't want missed here is we have a president now that values education, understands the role of education and together we need to lift up the profession where it needs to be, we need to honor our educators not just during Teacher Appreciation Week, but we need to make sure that it's a viable profession.

Let me tell you 30 states a midcareer teacher in a family of four will qualify for federal assistance that is unacceptable. That is unacceptable in this profession, so we need to create better pathway programs for our students to become educators.

You mentioned para-educators, our para-educators show up every single day working hard for our students in those schoolhouses, in those communities, let's make them teachers. How can we create innovative programming to give our para-educators or climate specialists an opportunity to become certified teachers and then fill those shortage areas where we need support for our students that can't read in reading recovery or ESL services.

We have to be innovative, and I am hoping now that there are financial resources that we have bold leadership strategies to really fill those gaps, but the best way to do that is to really lift the profession and make sure that

the students that we are serving now feel welcomed in our school so that they can consider themselves teachers in the future.

BUSTOS: So as far as teachers salary, Mr. Secretary that--that was actually my next question. In fact, let's see, let me so 20--in 2019 in the State of Illinois, we had more than 5500 K-12 teachers earning less than \$40,000 a year, you know to your point, so you know I'm just wondering what we can do more at the federal level.

I just earlier this year I introduced something again this is in a handout that I gave you, Mr. Secretary, but we introduced something out of my office called the Retaining Educators Takes Added Investment Now Act you know we love to--it spells out retain along with other provisions that it has in there, but it creates a fully refundable tax credit for teachers in Title I schools.

The credits start at \$5800 and ramp up to \$11,600 over the years to help retain staff, but so I am wondering what else, and I hope that you will be supportive. Please take a look at that.

I am hoping that those on this subcommittee will be supportive, but is there anything else any other investments that we should put into programs that fight teacher shortage and help the pay increase increasing Title I funding to help school districts increase teacher pay? Just curious as to any other ideas that you have specifically on how we can address that.

CARDONA: Sure. So you know, thank you for sharing that, and I look forward to having more conversations with you about that enlisting best practices because it does take everyone at the state level at the federal level, but at the local level also. We need to think creatively with this opportunity that we have to hit the reset button.

So some strategies as yours is a great idea I talked about the pathway program to make sure that our para-educators have an opportunity, but I think we need to do a better job starting in middle school looking at pathways for teachers for our students but if our students have a good experience they are more likely to want to do that.

Competitive salaries are needed. We need to really make sure that, you know, we are giving teachers a competitive salary and an opportunity to continue to grow. This is not just about the salary; it is about honoring the profession by giving professional learning opportunities, advancement opportunities, additional higher education opportunities for our educators.

It is really about making sure that we are taking care of the teachers once they choose that profession as well as recruiting them. I look forward to coordinating more with you on that as well.

BUSTOS: I do to Mr. Secretary. Thank you very much. My time is up, and Madam Chair, I yield back. Thank you so much, Mr. Secretary.

DELAURO: Thank you. Congressman Moolenaar?

MOOLENAAR: Thank you, Madam Chair and Mr. Secretary. Good morning and thanks for being here with us and for sharing your experience with us and very much appreciate your service in education both at the state now at the federal level as well as the local level and being a hands-on educator.

I wanted to talk with you a little bit as we have gone through this global pandemic obviously, it has affected a lot of what we have been seeing in the area of education, and it seems like there's been a lot of people innovating trying to make things work and using creative ways whether it's online learning, different choice options what have we learned through this process that may increase more innovation opportunities for parents to tailor programs that meet the needs of their individual students? Any thoughts on that?

CARDONA: Yes. Thank you, Congressman Moolenaar. You know you brought up something that is really important. Let's not go back to what it was at March 2020 because that system that we had before wasn't serving all kids equitably, so you brought up blended learning.

I think you know while I think the students need to be back in the classroom, the role of blended learning is I think, should always be a part of how we educate students. How we integrate social and emotional well-being of students needs to be something that we think about more--it should be more intrinsic in the curriculum in the experience of students versus waiting for a student to have issues and then react to it.

I have seen, you know, creative ways for students you know my kids in Connecticut, so if we are--if this is a classroom right now, it doesn't necessarily have to be taught, or the options that the district provides could be wider because there might be a teacher in a neighboring community where if two communities work together to share teacher expertise we can offer more options for students.

How beneficial is that for our rural students who may be don't have the same choice of classes because there are limited people in that community that can teach it? We need to be bold, we need to think outside of the box, and I encourage that for states to be creative with the funding to make sure that the programming that we give is better than what it was last year.

MOOLENAAR: Well, I appreciate that, and as someone who represents a rural district, I have seen the importance of rural broadband and the need to expand that to meet our educational needs for our students and have introduced legislation called the BOOST Act that hopefully will help with that process and it is very bipartisan legislation.

I also wanted to get your thoughts, you know, there are people sometimes who mistake--mistakenly refer to charter schools as private schools. To me, they are a part of our educational public school framework often offer opportunities for innovation and targeted opportunities for families who may not have other opportunities, and I just wanted to get your thoughts on charter schools, the role that they play in educational choice in general.

CARDONA: Sure. So you know I will speak for experience in Connecticut. I--some of the greatest examples of innovation I saw from charter schools, but I have also seen amazing innovation from your traditional schools. Really they are hubs of innovation, right? And I've seen them work, and I have seen other cases where it hasn't worked, and I have struggled with the accountability in some places, but I have felt the same way about other traditional schools as well.

So they provide an option for students and often times they are targeted toward a specific learning area or a specific need so they are part of the portfolio of choices but again my thing is I don't ever want to support a system of winners and losers and I want to make sure that all schools provide an opportunity for students to get a high-quality education. I don't support one school at the expense of another school.

MOOLENAAR: Sure.

CARDONA: That's my position on that.

MOOLENAAR: No, I appreciate that, and I also just want to get your thoughts on the 1619 Project. I recognize that you are not advocating for that; you are not saying that we should have a federal curriculum, but it does appear that in the guidance in the federal register, it didn't mention the 1619 Project, which according to, you know, the editor in chief of the New York Times said that the aim of the project is to reframe American history and I think that that raises a lot of concerns about revisionism of sort of breaking down the framework of how we've taught civics education, and as you pointed out the importance of building unity. And I just want to make sure that, you know, you're aware of that and get your thoughts on that.

CARDONA: Thank you, representative. And you know, I appreciate, you know, you sharing your concern. And I'm open to having more conversation with you to hear your perspective. What I will say is, listen, yes, it

touched a pain point for so many because it shows how divided we are as a nation in some places. I really feel that civics education is something that bipartisan--there's bipartisan support for that. We recognize that. We need to do that.

And I feel very strongly, very strongly that when done well, it should unite us under one flag, one country. And we can do that while providing students with opportunities to look at materials and look at different perspectives.

But again, you know, education in general should really unite us and lift us as a country. And I feel confident that our educators can do it. But I understand what you're saying, that it does bring up divisions that maybe existed already. And we have to be conscious of that as we move forward in education.

MOOLENAAR: All right, thank you, Mr. Secretary. Thank you, Madam Chair, and I yield back.

DELAURO: Congresswoman Watson Coleman.

WATSON COLEMAN: Thank you, Madam Chairman, and welcome, Secretary Cardona. I'm glad to have a secretary of Education that believes in the power of public education and is willing to support and protect our students in the public education system. I'm also encouraged that the president has continuously spoken to the issues of equity and eliminating disparities.

And with regard to what our children had been educated in, I am very much aware of the fact that the experience of the African American building of this country has been woefully inadequate we dealt with in our public education system. And that is something that we need to do something about.

And if we are seeking to look for an expansive civics program that recognizes the contributions that other communities, be they indigenous communities, Latin communities, black communities, their contribution to making this government great, the opportunity for students to learn at a very young age to respect and to recognize that these are communities of dignity and demand and are warranted respect, that's a good thing, because our children become our adults.

And our--one thing we don't want is to have a whole bunch of uninformed adults that seize upon the Capitol of the United States again, wrongfully united, wrong--wrongfully coerced into doing things that were anti-democratic and were also anti-unification of this country. Mr.--Mr. Secretary, do you believe that there's any such thing as separate but equal in education? And that's kind of a yes or no.

CARDONA: You know, we need to provide inclusive opportunities for students.

WATSON COLEMAN: So do you believe that you can acquire equal and separate?

CARDONA: No, I don't.

WATSON COLEMAN: Okay, thank you. Because I understand that there's going to be a huge investment in our under served, under reforming schools. I'm particularly aware of the whole Abbott experience in the State of New Jersey, I'm sure you are too, where for decades we have been putting additional money into urban schools that have been underperformed that are intentionally populated by impoverished children from impoverished family, and how all of that investment has not yielded the kind of equality and outcomes that we're expecting.

So I'd like to know what this administration's plan is to desegregate schools to ensure that there is equity of education and to ensure that students, irrespective of the zip code from which they come, will have access to good, diverse, and high performing schools.

CARDONA: Thank you for your passion. And let me just comment really quickly on what you said earlier about the experiences of not only African American Latinos, but also AAPI and women in our country's history. It is

critically important for all students to hear, and not just for those--students who are of those of that background, for all students to see the contribution--

WATSON COLEMAN: --And not--and not be celebrated one month a year every year, but throughout their learning experience, absolutely.

CARDONA: Correct. Thank you for that. But, you know, we have in this budget plan, also, a request for \$100 million to help diversify our schools provide programming were students learning in diverse setting. I benefit as a father of having--from having my children learning a diverse environment. I can't tell you--there's not a price I could put on that.

For me, it's really important that my students--my children, my own personal children learn in an environment where they see people that look like them, but also people that are very different from them. That's what we want to do to prepare our students for a world that's like that. And I think there is an investment in that in this budget plan. And there's a strong belief in this administration, in this department that there's value for our students in that.

WATSON COLEMAN: I know that secretary, and I need to see how we intend to accomplish that because all the good intentions in the world do need to be followed by a plan of action and a degree of accountability. And that hasn't been the situation. So I really look forward to that. One quick question. States have to have their plans in to reopen schools by June 7th. How soon thereafter do you think those schools will have the resources to actually implement the plans?

CARDONA: We want to get the funding out as soon as possible. So you know, forget them in June, we're going to move to move it along. There's no--there should be no delay. What we want to ensure in that June 7th plan is that there's aim for equity, as was mentioned today on this call, and also ensuring that stakeholders are part of that process. Parents should be in the--in the conversation at the beginning.

WATSON COLEMAN: Thank you, Madam Chair. I realize my time is up. If there's a second round, I certainly do want to talk to the Secretary about some other issues particularly impacting African American students, black students in particular. Thank you very much, and I yield back. Thank you, Mr. Secretary.

DELAURO: We'll have a second round. It will be three minutes, but--so that's where you--and Congressman Cline.

CLINE: Thank you, Chairman DeLauro, Ranking Member Cole for holding this hearing. Secretary Cardona, thank you for being here. I agree with your comments that education can serve as a great equalizer. We have to ensure that we encourage equality of opportunity, not equity of outcome, however.

My home state of Virginia has a long history of being a leader on fighting for equality on the educational front, Barbara Rose Johns of Virginia led her walk out at the Robert Russa Moton High School at age 16, which initiated a case called Davis v. Prince Edward. This later became one of the five cases that the U.S. Supreme Court reviewed in Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka when it declared segregation unconstitutional.

I'm grateful for her contributions and look forward to working with you to ensure that all students have that equality of opportunity for a high-quality education.

Additionally, I appreciate your recognition of the unprecedented increase in spending that President Biden has proposed. Apparently, math was not his strong suit when it came to his education because this budget that he has put forward is so far out of whack.

After so much extraordinary emergency spending, it's quite ridiculous. The president's skinny budget proposes nearly \$103 billion for Department of Education programs, which is an increase of almost \$30 billion. That totals 41 percent above Fiscal Year 2021 enacted level.

This level of an increase in spending in the same year that Congress has allocated extensive funds to mitigate the effects of COVID is highly irresponsible. When I served in the Virginia General Assembly, we were required to balance our budget. As lawmakers we must make difficult decisions and determine how to most appropriately spend taxpayer's money with sound authority and reason.

With that, I'll ask you Mr. Secretary, much of the nation's conversation in recent years has been centered around student debt, which surpassed over \$1.57 trillion in 2020. This is a problem, but canceling it is not the solution. That would devalue others choices who determined that going to community college for all or part of their education or that completing an apprenticeship, which would allow them to start in the workforce debt free, was the right decision for them.

Others have determined that their best path--best path was through a four year degree while incurring some debt. With many options that are flexible to student's needs, the federal government should not be picking and choosing certain life choices to pay for out of the paychecks of others. What will you do as secretary to encourage students to look at all options available to them as a path toward a successful career?

CARDONA: Thank you, representative. And you know, I want to be very clear, we could talk about individual strategies. I want to make sure that what we're--what we're a part of right now and what we're asking is for transformational shift in how we're looking at education, to make sure that it serves as the foundation of our country's growth. As the president stated in his address, you know, other countries are not waiting.

So there have been years of disinvestment in education. And what we're trying to do now is correct that. So for those students who have been underserved for years, generationally, we're seeing the symptoms of that. And I think intervention costs more than prevention. I look at a good education system is the best way to lift our country.

With regard to the student debt. You know, we have to do more in the agency to make sure we're providing a pathway to affordability for our students. And I think public service loan forgiveness, ensuring that there's a good return on investment for our students that go to college, ensuring that we're giving them every opportunity to be successful in college and not have a mountain of debt is, to me, just as important as revisiting the loan forgiveness process.

So by hiring Richard Cordray, by bringing talent on board that understand that that we have to advocate for students and all that we do, I feel confident that we're going to get there.

CLINE: Thank you. Your department announced last month it was extending COVID-19 relief to defaulted borrowers who have legacy loans under the federal family education loan program. While that decision was expected, you also announced a new requirement that was not, that guarantee agencies move newly defaulted loans to the department. If the goal is to help these borrowers, this new requirement will not accomplish that.

These state nonprofit agencies have relationships with these borrowers and can move quickly to remove the default and restore their credit record. In contrast, if the department takes these loans, it will be well into 2022 before borrowers see any relief remotely close to what guaranty agencies can do for them and in an accelerated timeframe. As well, transitioning these loans to new for profit, servicers will only add to borrower confusion already intensified because of new policies and procedures as a result of the pandemic.

Given all of this, my question to you is, would you be willing to revisit this mandatory assignment proposal and allow nonprofit and state guarantee agencies to continue doing what they do best and, frankly, were created to do? If not, I worry these borrowers will not be a priority for the department and critical relief further delayed.

CARDONA: Thank you, representative. And I'll be quick because I know the time is up. In effect, the reason why we brought him in is because we want to make sure that we're advocating for them, and then we'll keeping them at the center of the conversations and making decisions that are in their best interest. Thank you, though.

CLINE: All right. Thank you, Mr. Secretary, Madam Chair, I yield back.

DELAURO: Thank you, Congresswoman Lawrence.

LAWRENCE: Thank you. I reintroduced the Pell to Grad Act legislation that would extend student's lifetime Pell Grant eligibility to 16 semesters, and it will allow them to receive the Pell Grant Award during their undergraduate education to utilize their remaining eligibility for a graduate degree. Several my colleagues have referenced the burden of student loan debt. I believe this legislation is a meaningful first step toward promoting access to post-secondary education.

So I want to commend the Biden administration for proposing the largest one time increase in this program since 2009. I want to congratulate you and welcome you to this seat, someone that I feel very confident can rise to the occasion. So my question to you, can you explain the benefits that expanding lifetime Pell Grant eligibility could have for students, especially those able to use the remaining eligibility for a graduate degree?

CARDONA: Thank you very much. And I agree. For some students 16 semesters is not enough, and we need to support them. You know, for many of these students, it's a first gen students who are navigating that space for the first time and, you know, are charting a new course and addressing what their needs are, and sometimes it takes longer. So I support that, and I thank you for recognizing that. You know, the system needs to evolve to the needs of the students, and not the other way around.

LAWRENCE: Yes, sir.

CARDONA: So you know, Pell Grants, as you mentioned, this is an historic allotment toward that. In 1979, I think it was 75 percent of tuition was covered for in state colleges by Pell. That's significant. Now it's like about 25 percent. So it didn't keep up with inflation, clearly. And for many students, when they see that they make the decision not to go to college. So we have to do something about that.

We have to give access, equity to higher education. We know there's greater earning potential. So, this goes a long way to doing that. So, it's something that I know that, for many students, it's gonna be the reason why they go to college.

LAWRENCE: Yes.

CARDONA: For other students, it's the reason why they're buying a house or contributing to the economy by being able to do some of those things that they couldn't do if they were burdened with debt. There's so many--it really--breaking the cycle of poverty is what it is.

LAWRENCE: So, before I close, I want to touch on our efforts to return our students back to school. And I believe your decision to provide a free social and emotional learning course while you were serving as the commissioner of education was in--incredibly timely, considering what we're going through with remote and hybrid learning.

One of my biggest concerns is how we can ensure that students have the resources that they need to readjust following this year of pandemic, including access to mental health services. Unfortunately, we've seen the number of suicides go up and just all of the social issues, abuse and other things, that our children have been going through. How will you use your education as a commissioner during this pandemic to help shape the department's guidance to use by schools across the country, particularly in the area of mental health?

CARDONA: Thank you for that. We know our students have been hit hard. And, you know, we have to be prepared, when we reopen the doors and turn on the lights, to make sure that we're meeting the students of today. They're different than the students of March 2020. Our students have experienced family loss. They experienced joblessness of their family. They haven't seen their loved ones in year--in over a year in some cases. We have to be prepared to meet their needs.

So, instead of just additional 15, 20 minutes with the school counselor for some students, we need to infuse social and emotional well-being into the curriculum, into the experience of every children--every child. We need to make mental health support more accessible and remove the stigma that goes around that. We need to provide better professional learning opportunities for all educators to know what to look for, the signs, because-

LAWRENCE: --Secretary, this is the area I want to jump into. We know that we do not have enough mental health professionals to meet that goal, and I'm so glad you have that vision. And I would love to talk to you at another time about how do we build the workforce--

CARDONA: --Got you--

LAWRENCE: --Of mental health professionals to address the children in our schools.

And I don't want to leave without talking about student debt. Black women carry the largest amount of student debt in America. So, when we talk about the Pell grant, when we talk about other student loan challenges, we have to recognize that Black women are carrying the brunt of that. Thank you so much. My time is up.

CARDONA: Thank you.

DELAURO: Yes. Congressman Harder?

HARDER: Thank you so much, Chairwoman DeLauro. And thank you, Secretary Cardona, for being here.

I've spoken previously about the importance of career and technical education and how those programs really play a vital role in helping folks develop the skills that they need that are in high demand in our current labor market. In a district like mine, only about 17 percent of adults have a four-year college degree. 83 percent don't.

And so, if all we're doing is telling folks that the only route middle class is through a four-year college degree, we're going to be leaving out the vast majority of a lot of folks across the country. Even as we're doing more to accelerate people going to college, we can't forget about everybody else.

It's something that we've been working on a lot. I know there is a lot of challenges with expanding the availability of access to CTE and skills programs. I've introduced a bill called the Trades and Career Education Skills Package Last Congress. I'll be doing so again.

That package is very focused on trying to create more opportunities for hands-on career education starting in elementary school, going on through high school and community college, really focusing on partnerships with local industries to make sure that those students are learning locally relevant skills, as well as expanding access for federal scholarships for short-term, high-quality certificate programs.

Frankly, I would have liked to see career and technical education discussed more explicitly in the president's discretionary budget proposal. And that's something I hope to see when the full budget is released. But my question, Mr. Secretary, is given the critical role that CTE plays in communities like mine, how do you envision the Department of Education will support scaling these programs up?

CARDONA: Thank you, Representative Harder. And I can't agree with you more. You know, I was a graduate of a technical high school where I learned automotive. And I chose to go into teaching, but I see the value of giving students options and connecting those options to workforce needs in the community. And I'm sure in California there are so many opportunities to do that.

So, here are some very tangible things that I think should happen. We should take our schools, especially those schools with labs and create a second shift, right? Beautiful buildings, let's create a second shift, no

reason why the lights are off at 3:00, and give underemployed families, parents an opportunity to go and get a credential. We need to connect that with a learning that the students are getting.

We need to think about how our community colleges are setting up shop in our high schools after hours so, from 3:00 to 8:00 PM, we have credentialing programs so underemployed adults have a second chance to go back and get their credential, get their degree and go back into the community.

So, we need to think outside of the box. You know, with this funding and these resources, we have the opportunity to really think big on this. And I agree with you, we need to make sure that we're not just saying for years of college or bust. There are so many other opportunities. I look forward to learning more from you, working with you to expand opportunities because, at this agency, that's one of my goals, to make sure we're doing a better job crating pathways not only for our students, before our adults who want another opportunity at learning.

HARDER: Terrific. Thank you. It's wild to me that we offer Pell grants and other scholarships for some programs. But if you want to be a maintenance mechanic, which is a job where there is a desperate shortage of in--in my community, it pays six figures, it's a really fantastic career, but you are not eligible for the same federal scholarships if you want to go on that career path. Would you consider utilizing Pell grants and/or any other funding streams to better support individuals to pursue certificates and other certifications in that space, or other spaces like that?

CARDONA: Yeah. Yeah. Yes, definitely. As I said before, we have to evolve our systems to make sure that our policies are supporting students. Obviously, accountability has to be a part of it. We want to make sure our students are getting a good return on investment. But yes, we have to make sure we're nimble to meet the demands that are out there and the needs of our learners. So, yes, I definitely would be in support of reviewing that a little bit more and getting more perspective on that, making sure we're serving our students the best we can, definitely.

HARDER: That--that--that's good to hear. I know one last question, early exposure to these skills programs has been shown to promote career readiness. What about--you know, you mentioned some ideas for programs at the--at the high school level or earlier. You know, what can we be doing to support students as early as possible? Obviously, not every student, and you're a perfect example of that, is going to take us up on that opportunity. But at least it gives folks an option if they decide to do it. How else can we be sort of supporting workforce development efforts as early as possible?

CARDONA: Sure. Thank you for that. So, a couple thoughts on that. Not only does it improve career readiness but student engagement. Students learn better when they're doing things when they're hands-on. And we learned this year that schooling doesn't have to be in a schoolhouse.

Maybe students early on go on trips and see what's happening in their community, what, you know, advanced manufacturing looks like in their community, or what STEM fields look like in their community. So, we have to get students out a lot earlier, and we have to bring our partners in. Why not focus on getting some of our workforce partners on our boards of education to help shape the policy at the local level, to make this something that's not just a fancy program for some students, but infused as part of the program for all students?

HARDER: That's great to hear. I look forward to working with you on that. And thank you so much for appearing before the subcommittee.

CARDONA: Thank you.

HARDER: Madam Chair, I yield back the remainder my time.

DELAURO: Okay. Thank you. Everyone has been through a five minute round. What I'd like to do is to do a next round with three minutes and have people adhere to three minutes so we can get everyone's questions in.

With that, Mr. Secretary, let me begin. This is about ACICS, the for-profit accreditor, which was--they were reinstated in 2018 by the--by Secretary DeVos and the Trump administration. Now, this is the accreditor that was responsible for Education Corporation of America, Corinthian Colleges, ITT, the for-profit chains who precipitously closed their doors. There was a Ronald National--Reagan National University was accredited as an institution. They had no students or faculty.

So, accreditors are supposed to oversee quality, serve as gatekeepers, and they need to be removed when they fail in that responsibility. Now, the National Advisory Committee on Institutional Quality and Integrity has recommended that federal recognition of ACICS be removed. Will the department of education reach a decision on whether to remove recognition? How will you ensure proper oversight of for-profit colleges?

CARDONA: Thank you, Chair DeLauro. Yes, we stand by the decision, and we recognize that it's our responsibility to protect students by making sure that we remove folks that are--that are not helping produce a good return on investment for our students. They're going to get their due process. And they should, but we stand by the decision to move in the direction that we did.

DELAURO: Okay. Let me--English learners, a particularly challenging year, how will the department's Office of English Language Acquisition work with states and districts to make sure these students are getting the support that they need?

CARDONA: Thank you. We need to do better than ever before. We need to see a new day for our Office for Multilingual Learners. Going back to where we were is not good enough. Early childhood education is one, but language support services for students, there is such a gap between the practice and the research on that. We need to go back to what we know learn--works best, honoring and valuing the native language while lifting the second language, so we can have multilingual learners. There's a lot of work that has to be done. I look forward to engaging with that with my sleeves rolled up, because this is important work for our country.

DELAURO: Um-hmm. I thank you. With the--with a few minutes I have left, just let me just say in your conversation with Congressman Harder about utilizing schools in a different way, it would seem to me that we could use community schools in--in a way that these were opened usually from early morning until 8:00 or 9:00 at night, that that might be a good vehicle for dealing with how we deal with new learning opportunities and workforce development efforts.

CARDONA: Absolutely. I think you're spot on, especially because, you know, families trust their child's teacher. They trust their child's principal. They know that school community. They feel comfortable there. We really need to rethink how we use our space.

DELAURO: Okay. Thank you. I once taught at the--as a--as a substitute teacher at the Dr. Conte Community School in New Haven, Connecticut.

So, with that, let me yield and yield to my colleague, Congressman Cole.

COLE: Thank you very much, Madam Chair. I would have enjoyed that class, I'm sure.

If I can, Mr. Secretary, two quick questions. One, I'm very heartened to hear about your determination that--in reopening schools full-time. Look, in my district, most of them have been functioning since August every--in every case were full-time was better than virtual. And frankly, in one case, I was talking to a superintendent yesterday, he had offered both options.

About two-thirds of his students came in on a regular basis. About a third did not. He said it's a dramatic difference between those that did. And he said we're actually removing next year the option of going virtual. Have you thought about tying any of the distribution of money that's going to be under your authority to the restoration of five-day education?

CARDONA: It's my expectation that by the fall all students have in-person learning option five days a week. I really--you know, I want it now in the spring, but we'll problem solve with folks. But we need to provide in-person learning opportunities for all students five days a week in the fall. That's the--that's my expectation.

COLE: I really--

CARDONA: --But to your answer, we hold funds if they don't do it.

COLE: Yeah. Well, I appreciate that. And I hope you, again, use whatever tools you have, because I think the evidence, both medically for the health of the kids and educationally, is pretty clear.

The second question I have also relates to distribution. I'll be very candid with you. I think one of the problems that my side of the aisle have on the American Recovery Plan was a lack of information in the original legislation about how money would be distributed. Let me give you an example. It doesn't relate education.

But we had a formula in the American CARES Act that distributed money on a per capita basis. It was changed in the American Recovery Act, and frankly it was changed in ways that the money was skewed heavily toward blue states at the expense of red states. There are actually 20-odd governors that protested this.

So, I'm very interested, as you develop standards, what your criteria are going to be, because it's an enormous amount of money, \$130 billion that's at your disposal or your department's disposal. What are the kind of standard you'll use? What kind of transparency will we have in seeing those standards before you actually began to distribute those funds?

CARDONA: Thank you for that question. You know, we have an opportunity, a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity, not only to support students but to provide equitable opportunities for students and really address some of those issues that happened before. But we also have to be conscious of we're working--we're using taxpayer money, so we have to be as transparent as possible.

We have to be clear about our intentions and be very purposeful when communicating what the money should be used for. We wanna make sure we're addressing the pandemic impact. Some students were impacted more than others. That should be driving how decisions are being made, nothing else.

COLE: As much as you can share that with us as you're developing 'em or get there I think it would be very helpful to every member of the committee to have that information--

CARDONA: --I agree with you--

COLE: --So thank you. Again, my time is up and I'm gonna live by my chairman's admonition. So with that thank you very much and thank you again for your testimony.

CARDONA: Thank you.

DELAURO: Congresswoman Clark.

CLARK: Thank you. Thank you for the second round. Secretary Cardona, I'd like to go back to some of the discussion that we have been having around a rule that followed President Biden's executive order which directed the federal government to pursue a comprehensive approach to advancing equity for all, especially people of color.

And I wanted to give you a chance to address some of what my colleagues have raised both here today and otherwise about that helping students connect with the history of our country, with the history of racism and the toxic roots of slavery. Can you tell us what is at the basis of this and how you hope that this education around the history of our country will be uniting and not dividing?

CARDONA: Right. So, you know, I think that when we talk about disengaged youth, when we talk about exclusionary practices, disengaged families from schools, we really need to look at those as symptoms of something greater. And I'm speaking now from my years of experience in education as an educator at different levels. We need to do better to engage our students and our families in learning that is culturally responsive, that sees our students, sees their experience, validates their contributions to our country.

I think if you do that all students benefit, not just the students whose history has been omitted or left out. So again, I--I've seen it done. I've been a recipient of a educational system where when others are valued I see how this--it builds our country. I mean, that's the beauty of our country, right? The diversity and the different stories. This is a very unique country and we shouldn't lose the opportunity to really unite our students and--and have pride for their country by doing this.

And I don't think it's mutually exclusive. You can share that rich history of others and the contributions of others while also sharing the pride and teaching the pride of our country and how we're united under one flag. So I reject the belief that by doing this we're dividing. In fact I think those who think that don't really understand what happens in our classrooms and the roles of our educators to bring students from different cultures together, learning together. There's so much benefit to that.

I think that--that experience is greater in many ways than the experience that they get from whatever content they have in front of them. So we recognize the opportunity we have as educators to bring our country together and listen to our students and give them an opportunity to share their voice. They're ready for it. Sometimes the adults take a little bit longer but they're ready for it.

CLARK: Thank you so much.

DELAURO: Thank you. Congressman Harris.

HARRIS: Thank you very much. And, you know, just to follow up on that, you know, I appreciate you want people to know the rich history and contributions. But, you know, in Baltimore when they tear down a statue of Christopher Columbus that doesn't contribute to sharing rich history and contributions.

Now the Department of Education made the front page of the Wall Street Journal last Friday with a story that I'm--that I hope you're familiar with about the Courtney Report on Student Loans. Of great concern, this is--this is, you know, we are the Appropriations Committee and the focus of this article was that the Biden administration has outright rejected the Courtney Report and will continue to falsify or to claim large profits on student loans or even small profits on student loans portfolio when in fact the Courtney Report indicated that probably a third of the student loans will never be repaid.

And this does bear on the ability for instance to refinance student loans because if on paper refinance results in less profit that was never there to begin with, you might be less likely to refinance loans. So first off, the--article says--claims--and I don't--never believe anything I read in--in the--in the media on first blush. It says that Biden officials never saw Mr. Courtney's report. Mr. Secretary, did you see Mr. Courtney's report?

CARDONA: My staff is aware of the report and I stand by the decision to make sure that--

HARRIS: --Did you see--did you see Mr. Courtney's report--

CARDONA: --I stand by the decision--

HARRIS: --And did any of your staff see Mr.--read Mr. Courtney's report? See it. Because the Wall Street Journal claims your staff didn't see it, they dismissed it out of hand as some Betsy DeVos, you know, scheme against student loans and now Mr. Courtney is in--was in fact a very high ranking individual in a very foremost financial services firm who ran their student loan portfolio. This is not--this is not someone with a political agenda. This is someone who made great success in the private finance sector.

You stand by their decision having never seen the report. Is that your testimony today in front of this committee?

CARDONA: You know who else has a lot of credibility in the field?

HARRIS: Mr.--Mr. Secretary, excuse me. If you don't wanna answer the question just say look, I don't wanna answer the question. Are you standing by the Biden administration Department of Education officials in their assessment having never seen the report yourself?

CARDONA: I stand by the decision of my team to not validate a report that was developed without the same checks and balances that the reports that we use--

HARRIS: So you--so you think that it's okay to dismiss it without actually reading it and seeing what it says? Because this involves hundreds of billions of dollars of potential student loan default that is on our budget contributing to our deficit. Mr. Secretary, I'm disappointed that you would dismiss an--a report this serious. And I, look, I understand you're smiling about this. There's nothing to smile about. This is hundreds of billions of dollars in student loans with the Administration dismissing out of hand without the secretary at--even having seen the report.

I yield back.

CARDONA: I have confidence in my team and I stand by the decisions we've made. Thank you.

DELAURO: Congresswoman Watson Coleman.

WATSON COLEMAN: Thank you, Madam Chair. Thank you, Mr. Secretary. And thank you for standing by what you believe is the right thing for our students. And we had enough of Betsy DeVos and her misguided policies for four years.

Let me just say that when I do the pledge of allegiance to the flag and I say one nation, under God I feel something when I say that because I believe it. And so I'm very much appreciative of the fact that you mentioned that a number of times. I know that most recently there was a collaborative--an--a new collaborative that was created and that there was a national convening for two days around educational issues, particularly relating to the pandemic learning loss. You familiar?

CARDONA: The--yeah, the reopening summit? Is that what you're referring to?

WATSON COLEMAN: Well I have it down here as the national convening of the collaborative, a two day discussion of leaders and stakeholders to design evidence based programs to in--to address pan--pandemic loss.

CARDONA: The summer learning collaborative, yes.

WATSON COLEMAN: Okay. I'm really interested in knowing some of the outcomes, particularly as they relate to the impact of the pa--pandemic learning loss on minority students. And what we're proposing with regard to giving that the attention it needs.

CARDONA: Yes, thank you for brining that up. You know, the summer learning collaborative was really intended to make sure we take innovative ideas, best practices from across the country, share them with the focus on recovering from the pandemic in non-traditional ways. I often said I--I'd love to have summer learning programs without one ditto. Right? We need students to have hands on experiences. So that's what that was.

We're gonna be releasing a report soon, probably next month, about the impact of the pandemic on different students to make sure that when we reopen schools we're addressing those with energy and making sure that

the resources that we have are aimed at that. And definitely we'll keep you in the loop and look forward to having more conversations with you about that.

WATSON COLEMAN: And particularly mental health services for black youth in--in particular. Thank you very much. Let me just say that New Jersey has a reputation of having one of the best school systems in the country. But we also have the most segregated school system, one of the most segregated schools systems. And you'll find the differential is very stark in what happens in those schools.

And I very much am a magnet school person. I've got lots of ideas. I've got lots of ideas what I think that--the other schools should have been laboratories and that we should have learned from them to be able to apply not substitute for pub--just plain old public schools. And I look forward to having discussions with you because this is a very important subject to me. And I thank you for being here.

And Madam Chair, I yield back and thank you for your indulgence.

CARDONA: Thank you.

DELAURO: Okay. Thank you. I think that there are Ms. Lawrence, Congresswoman Lawrence, Congressman Harder, okay. What I'd now like to do is to yield to the ranking member for any, you know, closing comments that--oh, wait a minute. Congresswoman Lawrence, this is a three minute round. You--you're recognized.

LAWRENCE: Thank you so much. Mr. Secretary, thank you for your time. I just want to just echo and show some bipartisanship here. I think in our commitment to developing a skilled workforce that we need to look at Pell Grants and other resources for those who choose not to go to a four year university, that we're giving them the resources to aid them in attending these certified community colleges programs and again, if--the point I wanted to make about the skilled workforce that we need for the mental health.

When I dealt with Flint and we were trying to mitigate the lead poisoning in those children, the one thing they said they needed were social workers and mental health providers in the schools. Because we knew that the lead poisoning would have an adverse impact on their development and they would act out in school. And we didn't need to put 'em in detention and expel them. We needed mental health, trained professionals so that they could care for these children.

The number one thing we heard was that there are not enough people going into social work or the mental health profession. And so in your role how do we feed, support, and incentivize? You know, we have Teach America, we have programs for rural doctors. How do we grab hold to this? Because we are also dealing with this and policing. We need mental health professionals to address these psychotic situations instead of calling 911 to arrest somebody, beat 'em, and unfortunately sometimes kill them.

So we have a crisis when it comes to mental health workforce. And that--that was my second question. Thank you so much.

CARDONA: Thank you for that. And you know, you're absolutely right. We need to be proactive. What we saw in Flint should serve as a--as a lesson. We're coming out of a pandemic and the mental health needs of our students, and our staff I would add, need to be at the forefront. Our social emotional wellbeing--so not only do we have to plan for it but we have to make sure we have qualified staff.

I think the community school model really helps that. How are we engaging with our community partners? You know, I remember having experiences as an assistant superintendent with a community health center where we had a good partnership there and we had our non-profits or other agencies in the community. You know, it takes a village, right? So how do we think outside of the box?

That's why this investment in community schools is critically important, to get to those underlying issues. It's hard to learn--your academic bandwidth is diminished if you're hungry, if you have--if you're--have housing

instability. So we need to make sure we're thinking about the whole child and providing support and services. And you're absolutely right, we need to do more for mental health.

LAWRENCE: Thank you so much, and I yield back.

DELAURO: Thank you. Let me now yield to the Ranking Member, Congressman Cole, for any further comments or closing remarks that you could like to make.

Closing Statements

COLE: Thank you very much, Madam Chair. And thank you very much for holding the hearing. As always, a great hearing. Mr. Secretary, it's really good to have you here and have an opportunity to get to know you a little bit better. And I appreciate your testimony and I appreciate very much the spirit in which you approached the hearing.

Let me go back and make a few points. We do, and I would be remiss not to point this out, have a fundamental disagreement overall with the president's budget in the sense that we think there's too little in defense, too much in domestic spending. Your department is probably at the top of that list. A 41 percent increase is pretty generous to say the least. And we think there's gonna have to be some adjustment there.

And if we can't get here, you know, what I would fear is that appropriators will stumble into what's called a continuing resolution. You'll be living with last year's budget.

That's something that none of us on either side of the aisle want to do. But I also want to point out there's some areas of agreement, and I wanna recognize some of your efforts. I am particularly pleased with some of your proposals like IDEA. There's no question we need to be doing more there, and frankly, I think that gives local schools a lot of flexibility as to how they help students with special needs.

I like the emphasis as well on the Pell Grant that I know our chairwoman is also a big fan of. That again provides a lot of opportunity for other students. We--when I was chairman, always with our current chairman's support, we were very big on TRIO and GEAR UP. We thought those are very important programs for first-generation college students to give them the chance to succeed, so there's a lot of common ground here, and we look forward to working with you in those areas.

I would also tell you, and I'm going to go back, and as I hit in the opening question, I am very concerned about the Civics issue. I am very concerned about when I see a departmental, you know, federal registry notice that cites the 1619 Project controversial scholars that these are going to be the criteria that we use, that's going to be a problem, and that is not to me allowing local people to set the curriculum. It is quite frankly federal interference, and it is pushing a particular point of view.

I am not going to drag you into history, but I would feel a lot better if I saw Joseph Ellis and Ron Chernow and those kind of people cited although I would tell you, you are citing a grant you probably never should have mentioned a specific type of individual because every historian will have a point of view, that is not what we are trying to do here in this. So again I welcome a continued dialogue with you about that important issue.

I appreciate too you seem to agree with a number of our colleagues that we need in-person learning. I mean, again I think medical evidence is absolutely clear on this, was clear a long time ago. I think the hearings we have had show some of the social consequences of not having kids in school; everything from drug addiction to, you know, isolation to mental health problems suggests how important that is.

I know from talking to my own son, who is a classroom teacher, how concerned he was that kids weren't in classrooms where we had a lot of teachers there that cared about kids that were in a position to check on them, provide structure in their lives, some of these kids that is the place where they get structure and get protection.

So getting them you know unhooked as much as possible from virtual learning and back where they are in more traditional classroom setting is a--is a goal I think we all share and hoping we can work together. I don't mean that we lose the tools, we all know technology can be a marvelous tool and something that we need, but I think again the evidence is clear school-age children need to be in school, and we need to be using the levers we have to encourage people to do that as much as possible, and from your testimony, I think that you have that same kind of view.

Let me just again end with this, I want to thank the chairwoman again for the hearing. I know how passionate she is on these issues, and I think rightfully so. You know, I think we live in a society where education is the key to upward mobility. We want to give every child that opportunity regardless of the circumstances in which they come into the world, and we know they don't all come in equal footing, and some folks need more help than others, and some communities have been left behind, so you will find no disagreement there. We just simply want to work with you on the tools that we think were effective.

I will go back to my favorite GEAR UP just to say sometimes old tools we know are good tools. I have watched multiple administrations they always need want to do something new, and that is good. You know we will be pressing on but we need to remember sometimes when we've got something that works, and it has worked for 50 years, and I will point to the trio produced 5 million college graduates in this country I wonder how many of those kids that went through trio would have graduated from college absent that program or would have even been there in the first place and I would say that's a good program, that's a program that has produced for the American people and it has given millions of our fellow Americans opportunities that their parents and grandparents never ever had.

So again, we look forward to working with you to find common ground, I always look forward to working with my friend, the chairman. Thank you again, and believe me, I am counting the days until we can sit down in person and have these kind of discussions at length. Because I value your personal experience, I think it is a model of the American dream in action. I appreciate your commitment to educating children, every child providing an opportunity. You don't only say those things your experience over a lifetime, and my good friend the chairman's high praise for you tells me that that is true, that, you know, the values that you profess are the values you live by and the values you have made your career by.

So again look forward to having the opportunity to work with you and thank you Madam Chair for holding the hearing. I yield back.

CARDONA: Thank you, sir, I appreciate that.

DELAURO: I thank the ranking member for his comments and would just reiterate and I am thankful for the partnership that we do have on the Civics Secure Democracy Act and it specifically prohibits any use of the funds for a national curriculum in American history or even Civics education so I am hopeful that we can continue to pursue that. I think civics education is something that is really critical for the people in this country.

I think it helps to really strengthen our democracy in so many ways that we need to think about for the--for the future and I would just a brief personal antidote as my father arrived in the United States at age 13 as an immigrant from Italy, and they put him into seventh grade in the city of New Haven, and he was asked to define the word janitor in one of the classes, and he didn't speak the language or neither read or write the language, and he didn't know what the word janitor meant.

And but he drew on his Italian heritage and he focused on the word (UNTRANSLATED) and the (UNTRANSLATED) means parents and that's the way he described the word janitor, and at that moment his teachers and his classmates laughed at him.

My father left school in the seventh grade, which was the end of a formal education because of that kind of humiliation. He went on to serve his country in the military, served on the city council and the city of New Haven, and moved on with a wonderful career in our community and our city, but those days of when we do

not recognize the strengths of those who come from different places, different lands, different experiences and that we and our need to embrace them is critical in terms of our children and moving forward in education.

And I want to say a thank you to you Secretary Cardona for your commitment to our children and our students all ages, races, sexes, backgrounds and utilizing as the ranking member said what education is, and you know my parents spent a lifetime making sure I had the best of the academic experiences which who could foretell that I would wind up where I am today, but it is the great equalizer, education.

Education for families today is the way that they believe that their children will be able to succeed for the future and recognizing that our children's God-given talent that promotes them and whatever the old tools or the new tools that we want to utilize to be able to have them realize their dreams and aspirations which is what our education should be about and I want to say a thank you to you, Mr. Secretary. The budget does place strong funding increases for Title I special education, Pell Grants, higher education, community schools, let's bring them back, and so many other areas.

Universal preschool for three and four-year-olds, free community college, teacher development to be more prepared to teach our youngsters, and as we reflect on what we do as appropriators, we look to a budget that in fact invest in students and teachers, public schools, higher education, career, technical education, and we want to make sure yes, that the funds are utilized in a manner that has been set forth.

So above all, it is about making sure that average citizens today have a better chance and a better life and that American dream becomes a reality.

I will just close with this it also says that poverty is unacceptable and poverty is in some of our districts and some of our communities as the biggest roadblock to youngsters being able to get a good education with good schools, with good teachers, with good curricula and a direction for them for the future, and we do have the capacity to help to abolish poverty so that kids can get an equal opportunity for the future.

Mr. Secretary, thank you so much for your testimony today, and with that, I will bang my hand on the table here in this hearing is adjourned. Thank you and thank my colleagues very, very much for their interest and their questions this morning. Thank you.