

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

Statement by Miguel Cardona Secretary of Education on the Policies and Priorities of the U.S. Department of Education

Good morning Chair Scott and Ranking Member Foxx.

I am pleased to join you today, and I am proud to testify about the policies and priorities of the Department of Education, including President Biden's fiscal year 2022 Budget Request for the Department of Education. The full fiscal year 2022 Budget Request, which was released a little over two weeks ago, makes good on President Biden's campaign commitment to reverse years of underinvestment in Federal education programs and would begin to address the significant inequities that millions of students—primarily students of color—and teachers confront every day in underserved schools across America. These inequities in opportunity and access continue to be experienced by students pursuing higher education and career and technical education credentials as well.

AMERICAN RESCUE PLAN ACT

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

The plans to reopen are bold – and will require coordination among key stakeholders at the Federal, State, and local levels. But they match the urgency the challenges before us demand.

It's important to remember that once we fully reopen schools, we still have work to do. Our job will not be done. Generations of inequity have left far too many students without equitable access to high-quality, inclusive learning opportunities. Education *can* be the great equalizer – it was for me – if we prioritize, replicate, and invest in what works for all students, not just some.

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

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION FUNDING LEVELS

The President's fiscal year 2022 request calls for a significant and long-overdue increase in Federal support for education from birth through college and career. The proposed discretionary request of \$103 billion for Department of Education programs, an increase of almost \$30 billion over the fiscal year 2021 enacted level, would be complemented by additional mandatory investments under the American Jobs Plan and the American Families Plan. We understand that some have raised questions about the unprecedented increase in Federal education funding proposed by President Biden, particularly coming on top of emergency appropriations over the past year to address the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on our schools. However, it's important to recognize that these bold proposals follow a decade of virtually no funding growth in real terms for Department programs, a significant under-investment in light of the rising needs of students and families.

The \$73.5 billion that Congress appropriated for the Department for the current fiscal year, fiscal year 2021, is about 8 percent more than the fiscal year 2011 total of \$68.3 billion. Title I funding did a little better, up 10 percent, or 1 percent a year, over the same period of time.

The total Federal investment in elementary and secondary education grew at the same rate—just 1 percent annually over the past 10 years—not even keeping up with inflation.

FUNDING INEQUITIES IN STATE AND LOCAL EDUCATION SYSTEMS

This underinvestment in K-12 education matters because of the dramatic and longstanding inequities in State and local education funding systems, which despite more than half a century of litigation and reform, too often continue to provide significantly less funding for high-poverty districts and schools, which are more likely to serve students of color, resulting in a disproportionate impact on these students. Reversing these funding inequities, as well as immediately addressing the negative impact of those inequities in service of students, are critical goals of the Biden-Harris Administration’s racial equity agenda, and the President’s fiscal year 2022 request for the Department of Education would make a meaningful down payment toward these goals. Addressing these inequities are critical to our nation’s future. Our country and our economy will be stronger when every child is prepared to succeed in tomorrow’s economy, regardless of race, zip code, their family’s income, or disability.

INVESTMENT IN TITLE I GRANTS TO LOCAL EDUCATIONAL AGENCIES

The centerpiece of that request is \$20 billion for a new Title I Equity Grants program—part of the President’s commitment to dramatically increase funding for Title I schools—that would help address long-standing funding disparities between under-resourced school districts and their wealthier counterparts; ensure teachers in Title I schools are paid competitively; support expanded access to preschool; and increase preparation for, access to, and success in the rigorous coursework needed to prepare for postsecondary education and high-paying, in-demand careers. This proposal will further the goals of Title I as outlined by President Johnson in partnership with Congress back in 1965 as part of the War on Poverty, to help ensure that all

students—especially students from low-income backgrounds and students of color in underserved communities—receive the high-quality education they need to thrive and achieve their dreams.

INVESTMENT IN IMPROVING STUDENTS' PHYSICAL AND MENTAL HEALTH

Long before the COVID-19 pandemic there was increasing evidence that the conditions of poverty—especially concentrated poverty—take a tragic toll on the physical and mental health of students. This warrants significant investments in mitigating the impact of this toll in order to improve student outcomes. Congress recognized this problem, in part, through the creation and rapid increase in funding for the Title IV-A Student Support and Academic Enrichment program. Our request would build on these efforts through a \$1 billion investment for a new School-Based Health Professionals program to support the mental health needs of our students by increasing the number of counselors, nurses, and mental health professionals in our schools, and building the pipeline for these critical staff, with an emphasis on underserved schools.

COMMUNITY-BASED PROGRAMS

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

schools model at roughly 800 additional schools serving up to 2.4 million students, family members, and community members.

Our request also would help strengthen communities by fostering diverse schools through renewed efforts to improve school racial and socioeconomic diversity. We would provide \$100 million for a new Fostering Diverse Schools program that would help communities develop and implement strategies that will build more racially and socioeconomically diverse schools. Research suggests that diverse learning environments benefit all students and can improve student achievement, serve as engines of social and economic mobility, and promote school improvement. Our proposal also would build evidence around effective practices for addressing the growing concern that our Nation's schools are becoming less diverse and more segregated each year.

SUPPORT FOR SPECIAL EDUCATION

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

In addition, we would increase funding for the IDEA Part C Grants for the Infants and Families program by more than 50 percent, or \$250 million above the regular fiscal year 2021 appropriation level, for a total of \$732 million to expand access to early intervention services for infants and toddlers with disabilities. We would pair this increased funding with reforms to

strengthen the Part C program, particularly for children who have been historically underrepresented in the program, including children of color.

The President's Request would also boost the Preschool Grants program by \$105 million over the 2021 appropriation, to aid in the provision of special education and related services for children with disabilities aged 3 through 5.

TEACHER TRAINING AND SUPPORT

The Title I Equity Grants proposal is just one demonstration of President Biden's strong commitment to teachers. Other key investments, split between discretionary and mandatory American Families Plan funding, include \$412 million (\$132 million in discretionary funding and an additional \$280 in mandatory authority for fiscal year 2022) for Teacher Quality Partnerships to address teaching shortages, improve training and supports for teachers, and boost teacher diversity, particularly through investment in teacher residencies and Grow Your Own programs; \$340 million (\$250 million in discretionary funding and an additional \$90 million in mandatory authority for fiscal year 2022) for Special Education Personnel Preparation to ensure that there are adequate numbers of personnel with the skills and knowledge necessary to help children with disabilities succeed educationally; and \$60 million (\$20 million in discretionary funding and an additional \$40 in mandatory authority for fiscal year 2022) to fund for the first time the Hawkins Centers of Excellence program designed to increase the quality and number of new teachers of color. In addition, the American Families Plan would make a one-time mandatory investment of \$1.6 billion to support additional certifications at no cost for more than 100,000 educators in high-demand areas like special education, bilingual education, career and technical education, and science, technology, engineering, and mathematics. We are also requesting, through the American Families Plan, \$200 million in mandatory authority for a new Expanding Opportunities for Teacher Leadership and Development program to support

opportunities for experienced and effective teachers to lead and have a greater impact on their school community while remaining in the classroom (and be compensated for additional responsibilities) through such activities as high-quality teacher mentorship programs and job-embedded coaching. Lastly, the American Families Plan would double TEACH Grants from \$4,000 to \$8,000 for future teachers while earning their degrees.

IMPROVING CAREER PATHWAYS

The President's Request also recognizes that a skilled workforce is critical for both strong communities and a strong economy by proposing to make targeted investments that would help build the capacity of our workforce development system. These investments include an increase of \$108 million in Career and Technical Education National Programs to support an innovation grants initiative focused on youth work-based learning and industry credential attainment, along with a \$25 million increase under Adult Education National Leadership Activities to expand college bridge programs for low-skilled adults without a high school degree. In addition, the American Jobs Plan would provide \$1 billion in mandatory funding in fiscal year 2022 (\$10 billion total over 10 years) to expand career pathways for underserved middle and high school students that include partnerships with employers, community colleges and other partners and allow students to earn credentials or college credit while still in high school; and also would invest \$100 million annually over the next 10 years to help connect job-seeking adults to employment opportunities by focusing on foundational skills and embedded career services.

POSTSECONDARY EDUCATION INVESTMENTS

Turning to higher education, our budget proposal would make postsecondary education more affordable for students from low-income households through a \$400 increase to the maximum Pell Grant. In combination with the \$1,475 increase to the maximum Pell Grant

proposed in the American Families Plan, the increase in 2022 would be the largest increase to the Pell Grant ever. This historic increase is just a first step in a more comprehensive proposal to double the grant. Importantly, our proposal also would ensure that postsecondary students who are DACA recipients may receive Pell Grants and other federal aid if they meet current eligibility requirements.

Through the American Families Plan, our budget proposal would provide two years of free community college to first-time students and those wishing to reskill. It would also make college more affordable for low- and middle-income students at four-year Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs), Tribal Colleges and Universities (TCUs), and Minority Serving Institutions (MSIs) such as Hispanic-Serving Institutions (HSIs) and Asian American and Native American Pacific Islander-Serving Institutions (AANAPISIs).

The fiscal year 2022 request also would increase institutional capacity and student supports at HBCUs, TCUs, and MSIs, and other under-resourced institutions, such as community colleges. The discretionary request includes more than \$600 million in additional funding for institutional supports programs and programs like TRIO and GEAR UP, to help ensure underserved students succeed in and graduate from college. The American Families Plan also provides historic mandatory investments over ten years in college access and success, including \$46 billion for HBCUs, TCUs, and MSIs, and \$62 billion for a new Completion Grants program that would make formula grants to States to support the use of evidence-based strategies to strengthen completion and retention rates at institutions that serve students from our most disadvantaged communities like community colleges.

SCHOOL INFRASTRUCTURE

Too many students attend schools and child care centers that are run-down, unsafe, and pose health risks. These conditions are dangerous for our kids and exist disproportionately in

schools with a high percentage of low-income students and students of color. We can't close the opportunity gap if low-income kids go to schools in buildings that undermine health and safety, while wealthier students get access to safe buildings with labs and technology that prepare them for the jobs of the future. Accordingly, the American Jobs Plan would provide \$10 billion in mandatory funding in 2022, and \$50 billion over five years, for grants to upgrade existing school facilities and build new public elementary and secondary schools. Outside of the Department of Education, funding would leverage an additional \$50 billion in investments in school infrastructure through bonds. The American Jobs Plan would also provide \$2.4 billion in mandatory funding in 2022, and \$12 billion over five years, for grants to invest in community college facilities and technology in order to help protect the health and safety of students and faculty, address education deserts (particularly for rural communities), grow local economies, improve energy efficiency and resilience, and narrow funding inequities.

STUDENT AID ADMINISTRATION

In addition to making college more affordable, our budget proposal will improve the services we provide students and families to help them pay for college. We are requesting \$2.1 billion to administer the Federal student aid programs in fiscal year 2022, an increase of \$200 million over the fiscal year 2021 appropriation. The requested funds are necessary to implement the FAFSA® Simplification Act and FUTURE Act, which together will greatly ease the process of applying for student aid and accessing affordable, income-driven repayment options; provide high-quality loan servicing to more than 40 million student loan borrowers; and protect the personally identifiable information of around 75 million students and parents.

ENFORCEMENT OF CIVIL RIGHTS LAWS

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

CLOSING REMARKS

Thank you again for this opportunity to share more about the President's plan to invest in students of all ages and the institutions that serve them. I look forward to hearing your reactions to this historic budget request, and to learning more about your individual interests and priorities related to Department of Education programs and activities. I am committed to working collaboratively with each of you, to the greatest extent possible, to help improve educational opportunities and outcomes for all students.

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