



COMMITTEE STATEMENT

**Opening Statement of Rep. Virginia Foxx (R-NC), Republican Leader
Committee on Education and Labor Markup:**

**" Markup: H.R. 6102, H.R. 5129, H.R. 2499, H.R. 5428, H.R. 3114, and H.R. 6087"
March 16, 2022**

(As prepared for delivery)

Today, Education and Labor Committee Republican Leader Virginia Foxx (R-NC) delivered the following opening statement, as prepared for delivery, at a full committee markup regarding workers' compensation programs, school safety, and Community Services Block Grants:

"Most of the bills being presented in this markup are missed opportunities for bipartisanship. Instead of improving taxpayer-funded programs at the federal level, many of these bills will worsen existing problems, remove oversight mechanisms, and pile on unnecessary layers of red tape.

"Democrats have thrown bipartisanship out the window.

"H.R. 6102, the Black Lung Benefits Improvement Act of 2021, will expand the Black Lung Program making the already fiscally unsound Black Lung Disability Trust Fund (BLDTF) even more unsteady.

"This program is already in massive debt and, as of September 2021, total liabilities of the Trust Fund exceeded its assets by more than \$6 billion.

"While the Trump administration took concrete steps to follow the recommendations issued by the Government Accountability Office which would enhance oversight and improve the Trust Fund's financial position, the Biden administration paused these reforms, ensuring continued mismanagement.

"This is unacceptable. The Black Lung Program helps miners provide for their families and support their medical needs when they fall ill with black lung disease.

"This bill fails to make meaningful reforms to the program and address oversight recommendations made by the Government Accountability Office. I encourage my Democrat colleagues to go back to the drawing board and work on a bipartisan basis to make real reforms to this program.

"H.R. 3114, the Longshore and Harbor Workers' COVID-19 Compensation Act of 2021, is another bill that misses the mark and takes away important oversight in federal workers' compensation programs. For maritime workers covered by the Longshore Program, H.R. 3114 creates a provision which automatically

presumes that all workers diagnosed with COVID-19 contracted the disease at work.

"This provision will not only cost millions of dollars for maritime companies at a time when they are dealing with staffing shortages and supply chain issues, but it could cost taxpayers up to \$1 billion. It is time for Democrats to stop using this 'permanent pandemic' to assert more federal control over the workforce.

"H.R. 2499, the Federal Firefighters Fairness Act of 2021, also removes important oversight mechanisms in our federal workers' compensation program. Federal firefighters deserve respect and admiration for putting their lives on the line to keep us safe, but this bill does not improve the Federal Employees' Compensation Act, which federal firefighters rely on.

"I encourage the Department of Labor to continue its work providing increased assistance to federal firefighters with their claims through the Special Claims Unit. This is the responsible way to help our nation's heroes.

"H.R. 5428, the School Shooting Safety and Preparedness Act, fails to live up to its title. We all want to do everything in our power to prevent these horrendous events from occurring, but this bill is all talk and no action.

"The data Democrats want collected is already largely available, as multiple federal agencies already collect massive amounts of data about school violence. In fact, some of those reports have excellent information that could help local school officials, parents, and local law enforcement help prevent harm to students.

"If Democrats really cared about having a discussion on violence in schools, we wouldn't be talking about gun manufacturers. Instead, we would be talking about the crime wave sweeping across cities, and undoubtedly permeating school yards and classrooms.

"Promoting school safety means supporting policies that can help keep students safe. For example, students should not be prohibited from moving out of an unsafe school atmosphere and into a safer one. Students should not be subjected to violence, drug use, and gang activity just because of their zip code. Parents should be able to choose the school that is right for their child, especially when that school means students can feel safe.

"H.R. 5129, the Community Services Block Grant Modernization Act of 2021, fails to fix problems that have been plaguing the program for years. Community Services Block Grants (CSBGs) have been a crucial resource for people in need. Yet this program has not been updated since 1998—it needs more than a few band aids to make it a healthy program.

"This legislation fails to set concrete benchmarks for the programs it funds. This means that taxpayers could indefinitely fund programs that do not work. We need commonsense standards that will ensure the most effective and efficient programs are given priority.

"Finally, this legislation strips important religious protections from the original legislation. Without these protections, faith-based providers could be forced to choose between providing important poverty relief and living in accordance with their sincerely held religious beliefs. This is an unfair choice and one that could mean fewer Americans receive the help they need.

“The one exception to this litany of partisan bills is H.R. 6087, the Improving Access to Workers’ Compensation for Injured Federal Workers Act. I am pleased that Democrats and Republicans have been able to work together on this bill. I only wish this were the rule and not the exception.

“We should continue to make fighting for bipartisan legislation that serves workers, employers, and taxpayers a priority.

“Overall, Democrats are offering a lot of solutions in search of problems. Instead of addressing the problems facing these programs in a bipartisan fashion, Democrats have gone at it alone—and failed. This has created a slew of bills that do little to help American workers, job creators, or students.

“In the future, I hope that Democrats are more willing to work with their Republican colleagues to draft impactful legislation.”

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