

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

**Statement by Miguel Cardona
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Before the House Committee on Education and the Workforce**

**“EXAMINING THE POLICIES AND PRIORITIES OF THE DEPARTMENT OF
EDUCATION”
May 16, 2023**

Chairwoman Foxx, Ranking Member Scott, and distinguished Members of the Committee. I am pleased to join you today, and I am proud to testify on behalf of President Biden’s fiscal year 2024 Budget Request for the Department of Education. As an educator and a father, I know that nothing unites America's families more than the hopes we share for our children, and that is why the Biden-Harris Administration is pushing for bold investments to ensure all students have equitable access to schools, colleges, and educators that welcome and support them, inspire their love of learning, and prepare them to succeed in whichever career they choose.

President Biden's latest budget proposal calls on Congress to act with urgency to provide our schools with the resources needed to raise the bar in education by promoting academic excellence and rigorous instruction, boldly improving learning conditions, and answering unmet challenges like the educator shortage and addressing the mental health needs of our students. Our Administration is also pushing for dramatic new investments in high-quality preschool that provide all our youngest learners with a sturdy bridge to elementary school success. The Biden-Harris Budget supports the Department of Education’s efforts to boost global competitiveness by expanding opportunities for multilingual learning, redesigning high schools to include multiple pathways to college and career, and supercharging state and local efforts to make free community college a reality nationwide. To help more students from low-income backgrounds

access the benefits of postsecondary education, this Budget further proposes to increase the maximum Pell Grant award and provide critical resources to address students' basic needs.

The President's fiscal year 2024 request calls for critical, targeted investments that will promote greater prosperity and economic growth for decades to come. The discretionary request is \$90.0 billion for Department of Education programs, an increase of \$10.8 billion over the fiscal year 2023 enacted level. The 2024 Budget prioritizes funding for several core themes that are at the heart of this Administration's vision for education in America: 1) Achieving Academic Excellence; 2) Boldly Improving Learning Conditions; 3) Creating Pathways For Global Engagement; and 4) Making Postsecondary Education Inclusive and Affordable.

ACHIEVING ACADEMIC EXCELLENCE

This Budget seeks to ensure every student receives a high-quality education. Central to that effort is Title I of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, which delivers critical funding to 90 percent of school districts across the Nation, helping them to provide students in low-income communities the academic opportunities and supports they need to succeed.

Accordingly, our request provides \$20.5 billion for Title I, a \$2.2 billion increase above the fiscal year 2023 enacted level. This funding will continue the historic progress we've seen over the past two years, as Congress has enacted a total increase of \$1.9 billion for Title I since fiscal year 2021.

The President and I remain committed to ensuring that children and youth with disabilities receive the services and support they need to thrive in school and graduate ready for college and career. The Budget Request reflects that commitment through a \$2.7 billion increase over FY 2023 enacted levels for special education programs, including a \$2.1 billion increase for Part B grants to states, a \$392 million increase for Part C grants to support proposed reforms to expand early intervention services for underserved infants and toddlers, an \$83 million increase for IDEA Preschool Grants, and a \$186 million increase for Part D National Activities to provide

targeted increases designed to support the needs of students, schools, districts, and families. These additional funds represent an important down payment on the Federal commitment to students with disabilities, but there remains a nearly \$26 billion annual gap between current funding levels and what is widely considered to be full funding of IDEA, and that is why the Administration supports legislation that achieves full funding over the next 10 years, such as the IDEA Full Funding Act. In addition, our request for IDEA National Activities includes \$20 million in targeted support to help ensure that both military-connected children and other highly-mobile populations with disabilities receive the free appropriate public education to which they are entitled under the IDEA and do not experience unnecessary delays in service delivery as a result of changing schools or moving to a new school district.

The Budget proposes a new \$500 million demonstration program to incentivize school districts to leverage existing federal education dollars to expand high-quality public preschool in schools and community-based settings, including Head Start, for children eligible to attend Title I schools. Districts that apply for funds under this program must demonstrate a commitment to partnering with their local Head Start programs. Preschool is an important research-based strategy proven to reduce disparities before kindergarten entry, particularly for children from low-income families. Expanding access to high-quality preschool for Title I eligible children is critical to the Department's mission to promote student achievement and preparation for global competitiveness by fostering educational excellence and ensuring equal access to high quality educational opportunities. This new investment complements the mandatory funding proposal also included in the President's Budget (at the Department of Health and Human Services, in partnership with the Department of Education), which would provide assistance to every state to establish and expand high-quality free preschool, through a federal-state partnership.

I strongly believe that high-quality public education—from prekindergarten through postsecondary learning and beyond—lifts up communities, unites people around student success,

strengthens our democracy, grows our economy, and empowers people everywhere to realize their dreams. When the bar is raised in education—when we improve the core work of teaching and learning for all students—all of our nation's students will build the skills to succeed inside and outside of school. To this end, the Budget includes \$100 million for a proposed new demonstration within State Assessments program to assist local educational agencies (LEAs) in developing high-quality formative and diagnostic assessments. Assessments funded under this proposal would expand access to quick-turn information that teachers can use to identify learning gaps and tailor the learning experience to accelerate toward outcomes for all students, including students with disabilities and English learners. The Budget also includes an increase of \$121 million above 2023 enacted (\$405 million in total) for the Education Innovation and Research program in order to build on the Department's success in using program funds to develop an evidence base for strategies and practices that are effective in improving educational outcomes for students, including those in foster care.

BOLDLY IMPROVING LEARNING CONDITIONS

The lingering impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic have taken a heavy toll on the mental health of many students, educators, and staff. Research shows that students who receive social, emotional, mental, and behavioral supports perform better academically. Yet, there continues to be a critical gap between the number of school-based health service providers needed to provide daily supports, and the number of such providers currently in our schools. It is time we raise the bar by boldly improving learning conditions and rethinking how we invest in and provide mental health supports. We must transform from a reactive school model to a proactive model that focuses on a student's overall well-being.

Building on the \$1 billion Congress provided through the Bipartisan Safer Communities Act (BSCA) to address mental health staffing shortages, the Budget provides \$428 million for new awards under the School-Based Mental Services Grants and Mental Health Services

Professional Demonstration Grants programs to increase the number of school-based counselors, psychologists, social workers, and other health professionals as well as mental health programming and supports in K-12 schools. The Budget also includes \$150 million under the Fund for the Improvement of Postsecondary Education (FIPSE) in the Higher Education Account to create a complementary program to hire additional staff to implement best practices for addressing the mental health needs of college students on their campuses.

Our request provides \$368 million to expand Full-Service Community Schools, more than doubling current funding for this program. This significant increase in funding recognizes growing evidence that the pillars of evidence-based community schools—integrated student supports such as student mental and physical health services, expanded learning time opportunities, family and community engagement, and collaborative leadership— in concert contribute meaningfully to improved student outcomes and school performance. The Request would help take these evidence-based practices to scale by dramatically expanding the Full-Service Community Schools program to create hundreds of new community schools serving more than one million additional students, family members, and community members.

To raise the bar in education, we must also continue to elevate and respect the teaching profession. While the education sector has faced shortages in critical staffing areas for decades, the COVID-19 pandemic and tight labor market have made shortages worse, further exacerbating the already disproportionate impact on students in underserved communities. This Budget invests nearly \$3 billion in educators and school leaders, including \$798 million—an additional \$297 million on top of current funding levels—in competitive programs that support a diverse and well-prepared pipeline of educators and strengthen teacher retention. These programs include Teacher Quality Partnerships (\$132 million to effectively prepare aspiring teachers by supporting comprehensive pathways into the profession, such as high-quality teacher residencies and Grow Your Own programs (partnerships between schools, districts, community

organizations, and teacher preparation programs to recruit and train teachers), that improve educator diversity, effectiveness, and retention); Augustus Hawkins Centers of Excellence (\$30 million to support teacher preparation programs at Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs), Tribally Controlled Colleges and Universities (TCCUs), and Minority-Serving Institutions (MSIs)); Teacher and School Leader Incentive Grants (\$200 million to support school-based models of distributed leadership); IDEA State Personnel Development and Personnel preparation (\$303 million to address shortages of special education teachers); and School Leader Recruitment and Support (\$40 million to recruit and train school leaders).

CREATING PATHWAYS FOR GLOBAL ENGAGEMENT

As our labor markets become increasingly global, it is imperative to prepare our students to compete on an international stage, and that includes providing better opportunities for our students in America to be multilingual. Learning another language, or multiple languages, should be expected of our students and anchored as a skill that will enhance their global engagement and increase opportunities for success. This Budget will help us achieve that goal; we are requesting \$1.2 billion for English Language Acquisition grants, a \$305 million increase over the fiscal year 2023 enacted level, to strengthen State and local capacity to meet the needs of English Learners and their teachers, provide for professional development on multilingual education for existing teachers and staff, and bolster the multilingual educator pipeline via post-secondary fellowships.

Our Budget strengthens the multilingual teaching workforce, by providing \$90 million to build multilingual teacher pipelines and provide professional development in multilingual education, and \$10 million for post-secondary fellowships to improve the quality of multilingual educator preparation. The Budget also requests \$25 million for grants to States and LEAs to improve and expand instruction in world languages, offering new pathways to global learning for more students in more schools.

Lastly, in order to better serve English Learners and their families, I recently announced my intention to move functions involving the administration of State-administered grants under Title III of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) from their current placement in the Office of Elementary and Secondary Education (OESE) to the Office of English Language Acquisition (OELA), where they were originally located. This Budget further proposes to rename the Office of English Language Acquisition to the Office of Multilingual and English Learners and elevate the director of that office to the Assistant Secretary level.

To further prepare our students for global success, our high schools should evolve to meet the career and college demands of today and tomorrow. Reimagining traditional educational pathways is a critical piece of the President's vision to increase successful outcomes for all students and help them compete internationally. To improve the high school to college and career pipeline and prepare students for the jobs that are coming as a result of the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law, the Inflation Reduction Act, and the CHIPS and Science Act, the Budget requests \$200 million for our Career-Connected High Schools initiative. This initiative will provide competitive grants to partnerships among school districts, institutions, and employers to increase the integration and alignment of the last two years of high school and the first two years of postsecondary education. Strategies include dual enrollment, work-based learning, college and career advising, and assistance for students obtaining industry-recognized credentials. In addition, the Budget provides \$1.47 billion for the Career and Technical Education (CTE) State Grants program, an increase of \$43 million over the fiscal year 2023 enacted level, to support the President's goal to expand and build new models for workforce development starting in middle and high school. These pipelines are critical to providing more good-paying jobs for all Americans – and giving students a clear pathway to compete in an ever-changing economy.

MAKING POSTSECONDARY EDUCATION INCLUSIVE AND AFFORDABLE

Postsecondary education continues to play a vital role in supporting economic success for our students and for the United States as a whole. However, college affordability remains a significant barrier for many families—and it puts the dream of a college degree out of reach for far too many students. President Biden and I are doing all we can to ensure we can deliver on the promise of postsecondary education, and we are committed to making postsecondary education more inclusive and affordable so all Americans can access its life-changing benefits.

Pell Grants have been the foundation of low- and moderate-income students' financial aid for decades; however, the value has diminished as college costs continue to rise. To expand equitable and affordable access to an education beyond high school, the Budget proposes to increase the maximum Pell Grant by \$820 to \$8,215 for the 2024-2025 award year, through a combination of discretionary and mandatory funding. This increase is one piece of the Budget's comprehensive proposal to double the maximum Pell Grant by 2029. The Administration continues to support expanding federal student aid, including Pell Grant eligibility, to students who are Deferred Action for Childhood recipients – commonly known as DREAMers – and we are committed to working with Congress to advance this goal.

The Budget also expands free community college across the Nation through a new federal-State partnership. This proposed nationwide Free Community College program, supported through mandatory funding, would further ensure eligible first-time students and workers wanting to reskill can enroll in a community college to earn a degree or credential for free. To lay the groundwork for this program and scale up existing best practices, the Budget includes \$500 million for a new discretionary grant program that would allow grantees to offer up to two years of free community college to eligible students, including DREAMers, enrolled in eligible programs that lead to good-paying jobs, or that fully articulate to four-year degrees. Grant dollars could be used to quickly scale-up high-quality programs – for example, existing programs with demonstrated success that can be expanded immediately – or to support new and

in-demand programs. In addition, the Budget would provide two years of subsidized tuition for students from families earning less than \$125,000 enrolled in a four-year HBCU, TCCU, or MSI.

It is critical to help students obtain the resources they need to persist in and complete a postsecondary education. The Budget supports innovative strategies to improve student success and degree completion through \$119 million in increased funding for Postsecondary Student Success Grants in the Fund for the Improvement of Postsecondary Education (FIPSE). The Budget also promotes academic success by providing critical resources to support students' basic needs, including a \$20 million increase to institutions providing affordable child care for student parents with low-incomes through the Child Care Access Means Parents in School Program, or CCAMPIS. The request includes increases for Federal TRIO programs and GEAR UP, \$107 million and \$20 million above fiscal year 2023 enacted levels, respectively, to expand services that promote access and completion in postsecondary education for underserved individuals. The Budget enhances institutional capacity at HBCUs, TCCUs, MSIs, and low-resourced institutions, including community colleges, by providing an increase of \$429 million over the 2023 enacted level. This increase includes \$350 million, a bump of \$300 million, for the HBCU, TCCU, and MSI Research and Development Infrastructure Grants program, funded in FIPSE.

The Budget will improve the services we provide students and families to help them pay for college through an essential investment in Student Aid Administration. We are requesting \$2.65 billion to administer the Federal student aid programs in fiscal year 2024, an increase of \$620 million over fiscal year 2023 enacted, to support students and student loan borrowers as they navigate the financial aid application and student loan repayment processes. The increase will allow the Office of Federal Student Aid (FSA) to continue to operate the student aid programs, protect against cybersecurity breaches to ensure protection of borrowers' personal information, implement critical improvements to student loan servicing, continue to modernize its digital infrastructure, and ensure successful administration of the financial aid programs

through a simplified application process for students and borrowers. Failing to provide the requested increase to FSA for a second year in a row would result in reduced services for students, families, and borrowers in addition to putting the systems that hold sensitive data for over 40 million Americans at risk.

EDUCATION RESEARCH, ASSESSMENT, AND STATISTICS

Education research and data are important because high-quality information about effective practices and trends in student achievement can help improve both student outcomes and the return on the public investment in education at the Federal, State, and local levels. Our Budget requests \$870 million for the Institute of Education Sciences, a \$63 million increase above the fiscal year 2023 enacted level, to conduct, provide and share research and scientific evidence in education, including expanding research and development to support the use of cutting edge technology to expand and enhance effective practices in teaching and learning, and to collect data on the real-time impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on K-12 education.

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 27 percent increase for the Office for Civil Rights (OCR) to protect students, providing a total of \$178 million to advance equity in educational opportunity and delivery at Pre-K through 12 schools and at institutions of higher education. Increased funding will be used to expand staffing capacity and address a growing complaint workload, which will in turn enhance OCR's ability to resolve cases in a timely manner.

CLOSING REMARKS

I want to thank the Committee for inviting me to discuss the President's FY 2024 Budget for the Department of Education. I have often said that a budget is a statement of values. As you review and consider our budget request, I hope you see how committed President Biden and I are to boldly raising the bar in education—to transform our education system to better serve the

needs of all students. Our Budget is dedicated to achieving that goal. Our children and our country deserve it. Thank you, and I will do my best to respond to any questions you may have.