



COMMITTEE ON  
**EDUCATION  
& LABOR**  
REPUBLICANS

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**COMMITTEE  
STATEMENT**

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**Opening Statement of Rep. Tim Walberg (R-MI)**

**Committee on Education and Labor Markup:**

**“H.R. 604, the Reopen and Rebuild America’s Schools Act (RRASA); H.R. 7701, the Wage Theft Prevention and Wage Recovery Act; H.R. 5407, the Enhancing Mental Health and Suicide Prevention Through Campus Planning Act; H.R. 6493, the Campus Prevention and Recovery Services for Students Act of 2022; H.R. 7780, the Mental Health Matters Act, or a related measure, to direct the Secretary of Health and Human Services to identify, review, and implement effective interventions in Head Start programs, and for other purposes”**

**May 18, 2022**

(As prepared for delivery)

*“Today’s markup deals with a wide breadth of bills, but many haven’t received appropriate consideration. It leads me to ask, is putting legislative notches in the belt before November than doing what’s best for the American people? While there are two bills today that Republicans support, there is much more bad than good being marked up today.*

*“H.R. 7701, or the Wage Theft Prevention and Wage Recovery Act, is the wrong answer for American workers and job creators. Republicans believe that every worker should be paid in full; that is not under debate.*

*“What we do reject is weaponizing the Fair Labor Standards Act, or any federal legislation, to be used against our country’s job creators. H.R. 7701 can only be described as predatory. What else would you call legislation that increases penalties on job creators by 900 to 4,900 percent? Talk about overkill. These massive and unreasonable fines could completely bankrupt small businesses.*

*“Further, liabilities like this will dissuade employers from hiring independent contractors. This will disadvantage thousands of workers who rely on the flexibility that independent work provides. Fear of Biden’s Department of Labor could be the reason thousands of Americans lose work—this is fundamentally unfair.*

*“Americans should have the freedom to pursue flexible work arrangements without being strangled by red tape. H.R. 7701 will have a devastating impact on small businesses, independent contractors, and the franchise business model.*

*“H.R. 604, or the Reopen and Rebuild America's Schools Act, is a bill that was already rejected by the Senate and the American people during Build Back Better fiasco. This bill was rejected on a bipartisan basis, and revisiting it now is a waste of time.*

*“Forcing schools to start construction projects during record high inflation, and a major supply chain crisis, is completely irresponsible. Price spikes in raw materials, a shortage of construction workers, and record high diesel costs, are a perfect recipe for ensuring taxpayers don't get a good return on their money.*

*“Are we conveniently forgetting about the \$204 billion sent to schools during the pandemic, the most our country has ever spent on K-12 schools at one time?*

*“All this money was sent to schools with few guardrails on how it was supposed to be spent and with no accountability system in place. Is it any wonder that some schools haven't used this money for pandemic relief, or have wasted it on unrelated projects? Take one school district in Wisconsin, for example, that used COVID relief money to build a new football field, or a high school in Iowa that renovated its weight room.*

*“As the House of Representatives, we have an obligation to taxpayers—and in all truth this institution has been neglecting that duty. We need to stop throwing money around like it grows on trees. Today, I am standing against reckless spending, and I hope my colleagues will stand with me.*

*“Next, let's talk about H.R. 7780, which includes several pieces of legislation, some of which were dropped on us at the end of last week. Lawmaking is supposed to be a deliberative process, not an exercise in majoritarian rule.*

*“I wonder if dropping these bills at the last minute was a deliberate attempt to hide more government spending and paydays for trial lawyers at the expense of workers and retirees that rely on employer-sponsored benefits.*

*“Democrats claim that the other five bills in this package will address the mental health challenges students are facing, but these bills miss the mark. Republicans continue to highlight the overwhelming toll that students have shouldered thanks to school closures that have been led by Democrat governors and their allies in teachers unions. Not surprisingly, the majority refuses to address their own policy failures that led to this national catastrophe in the first place. Republicans will turn concern to action by offering a substitute amendment that provides greater coordination between state and local leaders based on the mental health needs in the states and communities.*

*“Lastly, there are two bills in this markup that Republicans support. H.R. 6493, the Campus Prevention and Recovery Services for Students Act and H.R. 5407, the Enhancing Mental Health and Suicide Prevention Through Campus Planning Act.*

*“In addition to the stress created by prolonged school closures during COVID, we recognize that college*

*students face a tremendous amount of social pressure and anxiety. One political commentator recently wrote, 'The COVID-19 pandemic saw a frightening rise in suicidal ideation, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, with 25.5% — a quarter — of 18- to 24-year-olds more likely to report they'd seriously considered suicide.' Sadly, we know mental health isn't the only issue college students face. According to the American Addiction Centers, '[N]early half of participating college students met the criteria for at least one substance use disorder.'*

*"These are heartbreaking statistics. These bills will help address mental health challenges as well as support prevention and recovery efforts regarding alcohol and substance misuse on college campuses.*

*"Before I yield back, I must express some frustration with the majority's legislative tactics. One of the measures we are considering today was introduced late Monday night. Can this Committee honestly say it provided a thorough and deliberative examination of that bill? Unfortunately, quantity over quality appear to be this Committee's preference. And when you move this fast, there are bound to be mistakes. And I'm not talking about typos. I'm talking about unintended consequences that will impact workers, students, and job creators. This is not what the American people elected us to do."*

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