



**COMMITTEE
STATEMENT**

**Opening Statement of Rep. Rick Allen (R-GA), Republican Leader
Health, Employment, Labor, and Pensions Subcommittee
Markup of Budget Reconciliation
February 9, 2021**

(As prepared for delivery)

"The bill before us today amounts to nothing more than a left wing wish list conveniently disguised as COVID-19 relief. And the Democrat Amendment in the Nature of a Substitute does nothing to improve the underlying text.

At a time when hardworking American families need Congress to come together to find real solutions and provide critical COVID-19 relief, Democrats are turning a blind eye to those most in need and ramming left wing priorities through this Committee. This amendment will do nothing to improve the underlying bill and doubles down on the many harmful provisions included in the legislative text. Rather than adopting this measure, we should be focusing on advancing proposals that help schools safely reopen, get Americans the skills they need to reenter the workforce, and allow our economy to return to its pre-pandemic prosperity.

The public health emergency we currently face has disrupted our nation's school systems across the country. But the way this legislation 'cherry picks' which students and schools receive assistance is wildly insulting. COVID-19 doesn't pick winners and losers. But Democrats are operating under the assumption that only some schools and some students need relief. We need all schools to reopen safely so future generations do not fall further behind. While Democrats may have an unfounded bias against K-12 private schools the students at these institutions do not deserve to be left behind while Democrats play partisan politics.

Equally as troubling is the bill's lack of workforce development funding. COVID-19

is further exacerbating our nation's skills gap, displacing workers who lack the skills to keep up with technological changes. One in five small businesses pointed to 'lack of employee skills as the single biggest challenge they face' while adapting to the COVID-19 environment, according to a recent survey from GetApp. Unfortunately, my Democrat colleagues deemed it unnecessary to include any workforce development provisions in their budget reconciliation scheme. While Republicans support those pursuing all types of education, Democrats are suffocating students' abilities to achieve an individualized version of the American Dream.

This isn't how we're going to recover from a global pandemic. The American Dream will not exist for the 1.4 million people who will lose their jobs due to a radical \$15 national minimum wage hike. An increase of this magnitude - 107 percent - is historically unprecedented and will crush small businesses already decimated by the pandemic. In a January 2021 survey of small businesses, 74 percent said a five-year phased-in \$15 minimum wage would negatively impact their business. Of those reporting a negative impact, 87 percent anticipated they would have to increase the price of goods and services, passing on some of those price increases to consumers. According to a January 2019 study done by the National Federation of Independent Business, enacting this job destroying provision would result in a cumulative reduction in U.S. real output of over \$2 trillion. Congress should be creating more employment opportunities, not increasing costs on taxpayers. President Biden has even sown doubt on the viability of including this monstrosity in a budget reconciliation bill.

It's truly appalling how far Democrats will go to enact their radical agenda. Even Larry Summers, Obama's top economic advisor, cautioned that the Democrats' bill may be too big. He wrote in the Washington Post recently that 'there are enormous uncertainties' with this proposal and that it could 'set off inflationary pressures of a kind we have not seen in a generation, with consequences for the value of the dollar and financial stability.'

The message is clear: for my Democrat colleagues, it doesn't matter how much taxpayer money is being spent, it doesn't matter how astronomical the price tag, and it doesn't matter how much COVID-19 relief funds are currently unused, so long as they can force their left wing agenda on all Americans.

This is shameful. I urge my colleagues to reject this Amendment in the Nature of a Substitute. I yield back, Mr. Chairman."

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