



COMMITTEE ON
EDUCATION & LABOR
REPUBLICANS

COMMITTEE
STATEMENT

**Opening Statement of Rep. Virginia Foxx (R-NC), Republican Leader
Committee on Education and Labor
Markup of H.R. 2574, the *Equity and Inclusion Enforcement Act*,
and H.R. 2639, the *Strength in Diversity Act*
May 16, 2019**

“As I reviewed the legislation we’re here to consider, it became clear that the question before us today is not one of equality for all children. That’s simply, thankfully, no longer a question. It never should have been.

Separate is not and was never equal. Racism is wrong. Segregation is wrong. While its place in the law is finally over, its lingering effects are not. As we’ve noted several times during this Congress, changes to the law do not mean changes to individual hearts and minds.

The question before us this morning is whether the solutions offered in these bills will stand the test of time. The question is whether, in the long run, these ideas will have helped or hurt the ongoing effort to achieve greater equality for children. I do not disagree in the slightest with the intentions behind these bills, but have major reservations about their efficacy.

In our spirited hearing marking the anniversary of the *Brown v. Board of Education* decision, which was 65 years ago tomorrow, we heard from witnesses who presented some diverse viewpoints on the best ways to advance racial equality in America’s schools. The hearing was informative, passionate, and proved to be a truly educational experience for committee members. Many of us came away even stronger in our convictions that each child is unique and worthy of having individualized educational opportunities, tailored to his or her development and success.

Access to opportunities, freedom to climb—these are the aspects of a student’s education that must be equal for all children nationwide. No one-size-fits-all structure can deliver on all of those essentials. Separate was never equal, but equality simply cannot mean uniformity. Equality is affirming that all children are fundamentally the same in dignity, importance, and worth, but also understanding that not all children’s needs are the same.

Our Democrat colleagues’ good intentions have resulted in shortsighted legislation. H.R. 2574, the *Equity and Inclusion Enforcement Act*, and H.R. 2639, the *Strength in Diversity Act*, make more political points than principled building upon past bipartisan, bicameral solutions. If we really want to work toward integration and equality, principles we all agree are critical to our children’s success, then amended legislation focusing on greater fairness for *all* students is required.

The improvements Republicans will propose to these two bills will streamline their enforcement to help minimize undue bureaucratic influence, while ensuring that recipients of federal education funding are complying with civil rights laws. As written, the bills promise new federal spending, which experienced members of this body know full well usually fails to materialize, resulting in more broken promises and frustration for educators, administrators, students, and families. Republicans have come to the table today with commonsense solutions that build upon existing, successful compromises.

The Republican improvements to H.R. 2574 and H.R. 2639 will show there is much we agree on with our Democrat colleagues. But we also want to ensure policy that has long-lasting, positive impact.

All children deserve an excellent education and expanded opportunities. The legacy of *Brown v. Board of Education* should be to increase access to these opportunities and empower parents to choose the best educational tracks for their children. *Brown v. Board* was about eliminating the ability of the state to consign children to low-performing schools with no means of escape. Committee Republicans have promoted bipartisan initiatives like opportunity zones and expanded school choice as ways to lift communities and unleash opportunity and

success. When Democrats are ready to work with us, we want nothing more than to see all American children prosper.”

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