



COMMITTEE ON
**EDUCATION
& LABOR**
REPUBLICANS

**COMMITTEE
STATEMENT**

**Opening Statement of Rep. Virginia Foxx (R-NC), Republican Leader
Committee on Education and Labor
Markup of Budget Reconciliation
February 9, 2021**

(As prepared for delivery)

“Just yesterday we discussed our shared goal of being the model committee again this Congress. I also stressed the importance of ensuring all legislation receives a proper, thorough, and bipartisan examination. On both these goals I am disappointed.

With barely a day to review extensive text, we are being asked to consider broad, sweeping legislation written behind closed doors without any legitimate effort to have bipartisan negotiations. This isn’t the standard this Committee should aim for, and it is an insult to the deliberative process of the People’s House.

Congressional Democrats have never let a crisis go to waste so it’s no surprise they want to use this process as an opportunity to create wasteful, permanent programs and expand the power of Washington bureaucrats to the detriment of students, workers, and job creators.

Yet despite the cost and scope of this partisan bill, Democrats fail to help mitigate the challenges faced by so many American families. Parents and students have relayed heartbreaking stories about the failures of their schools’ transition to online learning and continued push to remain virtual. Students are falling behind, and mental health issues are on the rise. We know the costs of keeping schools closed are high. So why are schools still closed? The science tells us we can reopen them safely. In fact, many private schools have done just that. We’ve already spent tens of billions of dollars in new federal aid to help schools obtain the important safety supplies they need to reopen, yet unions are still throwing

up roadblocks and changing the goal posts at every turn. That is not what America's children need during this time!

This one-sided budget reconciliation scheme accomplishes more for the left-wing playbook than it does for struggling Americans who are desperate to get back to school and work. Instead, we should be focused on solutions that will help get our economy back on track. To do so, we must ensure that relief for Americans is temporary, targeted, and tied to COVID-19.

Unfortunately, this bill is full of partisan policies disguised as COVID relief measures.

This bill includes a radical wage hike that increases the national minimum wage by 107 percent. Yesterday, the nonpartisan Congressional Budget Office said this proposal would result in 1.4 million lost jobs around the country and increase prices for families and consumers. Why in the world would we vote to reduce employment when so many Americans are suffering from the pandemic and desperate to get back to work? Even President Biden says this provision won't be included in the final budget reconciliation scheme.

Another provision in the bill creates an unprecedented and extreme change related to workers' compensation programs for federal and maritime workers. The legislation mandates that many federal workers and maritime workers who contract COVID-19 are presumed to have contracted the virus through work-related activities. This proposed change, which has not been the subject of any Committee hearings, would undermine the integrity of these programs and force taxpayers to cover many non-employment-related claims while posing a significant financial burden on federal agencies and taxpayers.

Moreover, this bill includes a change in COBRA premiums that fails to include pro-life protections to ensure that no federal funds are used to provide abortion services. The Democrats are unwilling to address this concern. We have a moral obligation to protect the most vulnerable among us – to be a voice for those without one. Using taxpayer dollars to fund abortion services is not only despicable, it is also blatantly misrepresenting millions of pro-life advocates like many on this side of the dais and in our respective districts.

Let's remember that we are talking about spending in the trillions. I wonder if my

colleagues across the aisle have forgotten that we are dealing with the hard-earned money of America's taxpayers. This money can't just be printed as needed.

While there has been no true evaluation of how trillions in hardworking taxpayer money has been spent, there have been plenty of stories of waste, fraud, and abuse. USA Today reported that international scammers have taken \$36 billion in fraudulent unemployment benefits from the United States. Yet today, Democrats are pushing taxpayers to dole out more of their hard-earned money at a time when many are forced to tighten their belts.

We can and should do better than this bill. I yield back Mr. Chairman."

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