



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. 4334, the *Dignity in Aging Act* and H.R. 4301, the *School
Shooting Safety and Preparedness Act*
September 18, 2019**

(As prepared for delivery)

“Today we will markup two bills. One is the product of diligent, bipartisan hard work and shows the good that can come from working together. The other, unfortunately, turns a serious issue into a political stunt instead of offering serious policy. Each of these bills focus on our nation’s most vulnerable and valuable citizens - older Americans and school children. While the victory of successfully working to reauthorize the Older Americans Act (OAA) is great, the failure to pass meaningful policy to help keep our kids safe at school is particularly disappointing.

For over 50 years, OAA has helped provide social and nutrition services to older Americans. With more than 41 million Americans age 65 and older, the programs and services offered by OAA are helping them maintain independence.

The reach of this law is substantial and covers many aspects of elder care. In addition to well-known programs like Meals on Wheels, OAA supports services that include: nutrition programs providing meals at senior centers, schools, and churches; care to prevent the abuse, neglect, and exploitation of seniors; family caregiver support systems; and community service employment opportunities for older Americans. The data shows overwhelmingly that these programs help older Americans live higher-quality lives.

This OAA reauthorization reflects our commitments to our nation’s seniors and builds upon the law’s flexible policies, allowing older Americans to age with health, dignity, and independence in the communities of their choosing.

While I am encouraged by the teamwork and bipartisanship that went into the OAA reauthorization, I wish we could have applied the same collaboration and serious conversations to H.R. 4301.

Everyone in this room cares deeply about the safety and success of our nation's students. And we can all agree that school violence is a serious topic that deserves a serious conversation. Unfortunately, this bill falls far short.

While school shootings are real threats our schools and children face, sadly they are not the only threats they experience. The hearing held on September 11, 2019, which examined trauma informed practices in education, made this very point – students can experience trauma in a variety of frightening ways. The hearing did NOT discuss, nor decide, that complex, subjective gun data collection is the solution to childhood trauma.

While the Democrats may consider this recent hearing a legislative hearing for the bill we are now considering, none of the witness testimony mentioned the need for detailed firearm data. What was mentioned? When students experience trauma, it can lead to adverse behaviors, so teachers and school officials need to take proactive steps to connect with their students.

H.R. 4301 seems to be an attempt to score political points instead of offering real solutions. The bill does not provide educators and school staff with the tools to help traumatized students. The data, which Democrats believe to be crucial, is largely already being collected by the relevant agencies. In fact, the overwhelming amount of reporting and collecting requirements included in the Democrats' bill would be difficult for the Department of Education to collect and will likely end up burdening schools.

This bill and the unnecessary reporting requirements included in it are not about school safety, but instead about gun politics. That's why Committee Republicans will offer a substitute amendment. I believe we can do more to ensure our nation's children are safe if we leave politically charged talking points at the door and put our heads together to pass meaningful reform."

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