



COMMITTEE STATEMENT

Opening Statement of Chairman Tim Walberg (R-MI)
Education and Workforce Committee
“Examining the Policies and Priorities of the Department of Education”
May 14, 2026

(As prepared for delivery)

Good morning. Secretary McMahon, welcome back to the Committee. Under your leadership, the Trump administration is delivering on reforms that will make education less expensive, improve outcomes for students and families, protect civil rights, and empower states and local communities with greater freedom to make the education decisions that are right for them.

First, I applaud the Department of Education for its swift implementation of the reforms enacted under the Working Families Tax Cuts. That law contains the most significant reforms to higher education in more than a decade. The Working Families Tax Cuts will lower college costs and debt burdens for students and families, hold schools accountable so they deliver programs that set students up for future success, and provide students and workers with new pathways to successful careers.

In the months since enactment, the Department has pursued an aggressive and consensus-driven implementation process. Through two separate negotiated rulemaking processes, the Department successfully reached consensus on regulations addressing the law’s student loan reforms, accountability system, and Pell Grant expansion for short-term workforce programs. Madam Secretary, that is impressive work.

At the same time, the Department has been tackling broader challenges within our postsecondary education system. First, Madam Secretary, you fixed the FAFSA. The Biden-Harris administration famously botched the rollout of the updated FAFSA, but under your leadership, the Department launched the 2026-2027 FAFSA earlier than ever before. As a result, FAFSA completions increased significantly, giving more students an opportunity to pursue their postsecondary dreams.

In addition, student loan repayment is finally back on track. The previous administration spent its time pursuing illegal efforts to shift student loan debt onto taxpayers, while this Department is helping borrowers regain their financial footing and return to repayment responsibly.

The Department is also taking the threat of unreported foreign funding seriously by opening new Section 117 investigations into non-compliant institutions and revamping the reporting portal to increase transparency and public accessibility.

Finally, the Department is addressing student aid fraud. In recent years, ghost student fraud has cost taxpayers millions of dollars and crowded legitimate students out of classrooms. Criminals are increasingly using AI to expand the scale and sophistication of these schemes, exploiting vulnerabilities that were worsened when key safeguards were weakened.

Since taking office, however, Secretary McMahon has implemented aggressive anti-fraud measures, including restoring critical safeguards, strengthening identity verification requirements, and improving the Department's ability to detect fraudulent activity. Those efforts helped block over \$1 billion in attempted fraud in 2025 alone. Again, Madam Secretary, impressive work.

At the K-12 level, the Working Families Tax Cuts delivered again. That law included a massive expansion of school choice by allowing

taxpayers to subtract up to \$1,700 from their tax bill for donations made to nonprofit scholarship granting organizations, or SGOs. Those organizations, which must be approved by governors, will distribute scholarships to families to help cover tuition, tutoring, special education services, or other education-related expenses. The program will become operational in January 2027, and the Joint Committee on Taxation estimates that by 2034 the program will make approximately \$4.4 billion available to students and families annually.

As of last week, 31 states had indicated that they would participate. Unfortunately, most Democrat-led states have chosen politics over families, but I was encouraged to hear that Governor Hochul to opt New York into the program. That is great news, and I hope many other Democrats will follow. Secretary McMahan, while the Treasury Department is responsible for implementation, thank you for working closely with Treasury to ensure this program fulfills its promise of expanding educational freedom for American families.

Secretary McMahan, thank you as well for standing up for parents. Whether it's restoring the promise of Title IX for women and girls or stopping efforts by states and school districts to conceal health and wellbeing information from parents in violation of FERPA, the Department is once again putting parents back in the driver's seat of their children's education.

Secretary McMahan, you are also continuing the fight against antisemitism. This Committee has been beating the drum on this issue, and we will continue to do so. Our friends on the other side of the aisle seem interested in this issue only when they believe there is a political benefit to be gained. That's tragic. Thank you for standing up for Jewish students and educators and for holding institutions accountable when they fail to protect students' safety and access to educational opportunity.

Finally, Madam Secretary, I applaud your ongoing efforts to return education decision-making to states and local communities where it belongs. You've already demonstrated that education programs are more effective when administered alongside related workforce, economic, and community priorities. The Committee looks forward to working with you to advance our shared goal of empowering families, states, and communities to deliver better outcomes for students, families, workers, and taxpayers.

Secretary McMahon, again, thank you for being here. I look forward to your testimony.