

EDUCATION & LABOR COMMITTEE

Congressman George Miller, Chairman

Strengthening America's Middle Class

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Chairman Hinojosa Statement At Hearing On Approaches to College Preparation

WASHINGTON, D.C. – *Below are the prepared remarks of U.S. Rep. Rubén Hinojosa (D-TX), chairman of the House Subcommittee On Higher Education, Lifelong Learning, and Competitiveness, for a subcommittee hearing on “The Higher Education Act: Approaches to College Preparation.”*

Good Afternoon. Welcome to the subcommittee’s second hearing on the reauthorization of the Higher Education Act.

It is no accident that one of the key components of President Johnson’s War and Poverty was the Higher Education Act of 1965. The power of education to increase earnings and improve overall quality of life is well documented. Higher education is an integral part of the American Dream.

College access and success requires: high expectations and aspirations, the know-how to act on them, rigorous academic preparation, and the financial resources to be able to pay for college.

From the beginning, the Higher Education Act has recognized that college preparation is an essential piece of the college access and success puzzle. The TRIO programs are part of the original federal policy in support of higher education. The High School Equivalency Program and College Assistance Migrant program were designed to address the unique needs of students from migrant farm worker families. Before HEP and CAMP, there was no record of a migrant student achieving a college education. In 1998, the Higher Education expanded these efforts by building partnerships for college preparation, known as the GEAR UP program.

The sad truth is that these programs only reach a fraction of the eligible population – some estimates are as low as merely 10 percent. This is at a time when the level of educational attainment is increasingly the dividing line between the haves and the have-nots. Over their lifetime, college graduates earn approximately 73 percent more than high school graduates. Forty-nine of the 50 highest paying occupations require postsecondary education.

The President’s budget estimates that \$90 billion will be devoted to the student aid programs in 2008. However, only a little more than \$1.1 billion will be invested in the college preparation programs, including GEAR UP and TRIO. This represents an actual decrease in funds from fiscal year 2005. We must do better than that.

One of the issues that we will need to tackle in this reauthorization of the Higher Education Act is ensuring that all students have access to the information and academic preparation that they need to be

able to take advantage of postsecondary education opportunities. We need to increase the college know-how in communities that have not had access to college opportunities.

That is why today's hearing is so important. We will discuss some of the key federal investments in college preparation and outreach. We will also learn about state and private sector initiatives. I am looking forward to the witnesses' testimony and thank all of you for joining us today.

I now recognize the Ranking Member of the subcommittee, Congressman Ric Keller, for his opening statement.

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