

EDUCATION & LABOR COMMITTEE

Congressman George Miller, Chairman

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Chairman Miller Statement at Committee Hearing On “Research and Best Practices on Successful School Turnaround”

WASHINGTON, D.C. – *Below are the prepared remarks of U.S. Rep. George Miller (D-CA), chairman of the House Education and Labor Committee, for a committee hearing on “Research and Best Practices on Successful School Turnaround”*

Good morning.

Today’s hearing will look at the critical issue of how to turnaround our nation’s failing schools.

This hearing continues our series on the reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act.

We’ve held eight hearings this year looking at a range of issues from charter schools to effective teachers and beyond.

And through these hearings we have learned that to compete in the global marketplace, our students must have a world-class education system with clear, high and rigorous standards that are internationally benchmarked.

These hearings have also brought to light how valuable data is to learning and teaching. We need to drive the use of data at all levels of education.

We have also learned that a successful school supports its teachers and ensures all students have access to an effective teacher. But in order to do this we can’t simply fix the law by making a few small tweaks.

There is too much at stake.

Our global competitiveness is relying on the actions we’re taking today. And we don’t get to redo tomorrow what we’ve done wrong today.

It is time to take our education system into the future.

One of the biggest problems in our education system is the dropout crisis and our lowest performing schools.

Turning around our lowest performing schools is critical for our economy, for our communities and for our students.

A recent report shows that cutting the dropout rate in half would yield \$45 billion annually in new federal tax revenues or cost savings.

There are 5,000 chronically low-performing schools in this country doing a disservice to hundreds of thousands of students.

Two thousand high schools produce 70 percent of our nation's dropouts.

These are schools where the dropout rates are staggeringly high, where students are not even close to proficient and where teachers and leaders often do not know what else they can do.

No Child Left Behind dictated interventions to help these schools but what we've learned since the law was enacted is they were too prescriptive and unrelated to the real needs of the schools.

Different systems work for different schools.

What most of these schools need is a fresh start.

A fresh start doesn't have to mean shutting down a school.

Shutting down a school should be the last option after other systems of improvement have failed and when it's clear that some schools are impervious to change.

A fresh start doesn't mean firing all the teachers and only hiring back an arbitrary number.

You can find some of the best teachers in the worst performing schools, but they are stuck in a system that isn't supporting them.

And, if you fire all the teachers, you end up getting rid of the ones that are making a difference.

A fresh start means buy in from school leaders, teachers, parents and the community.

It means a team effort to put together the tools to make that school great.

Thankfully, we're not working in the dark. There is extensive research and real world examples that can show us the elements that lead to school success.

First, turning around schools is about teaching and learning. It's about giving teachers the resources they need like data systems to track student progress and a culture of continuous improvement.

Second, it's about using time to the advantage of the school, which could mean an extending learning day which include successful after school programs. It's about making sure schools have the time they need to catch up and use targeted academic supports as well as enrichment activities, like arts and music that keep students engaged.

Lastly, turning around schools is about what the community can do to support the school's efforts and what the school must do to meet community needs. This means providing wraparound services to meet the individual needs of students.

When you put all the right systems in place, you can turn around even the worst performing school.

I look forward to hearing from our witnesses today about what works and what does to help turn around our lowest performing schools.

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