



Chairman Tom Cole

*Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human Services,
Education, and Related Agencies
House Committee on Appropriations*

**Subcommittee Markup of the Fiscal Year 2017 Labor, HHS, Education Bill
July 7, 2016
Opening Statement As Prepared**

Good morning ladies and gentlemen, and welcome to the Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human Services, Education and related agencies. This morning we will consider a bill funding these agencies in fiscal year 2017. I am pleased to chair this Subcommittee and to provide support for important programs that touch the lives of every American.

The bill we will consider today provides increases to advance biomedical research, protect public health, and ensure quality education services for those most in need across our country. It does so in a fiscally responsible way, by living within the agreed-upon budget caps and by eliminating low-priority or unauthorized programs in order to fund high-priority activities that benefit all Americans.

The National Institutes of Health, our Nation's premier biomedical research agency, is funded at \$1.25 billion above last year – \$2.25 billion more than the President requested. We rejected the President's proposal to cut NIH funding for \$1 billion within this bill. NIH is working to find cures for Alzheimer's disease, cancer and develop the next generation of medical treatment through the use of precision medicine techniques and we need to continue to build upon the \$2 billion increase we provided last year, not take steps back. I understand my friends in the other body have provided a \$2 billion increase for the NIH again this year. I want to be clear I view the mark we set forth today as a floor – not a ceiling – for biomedical research funding and I am hopeful that this number can increase as the process moves forward.

The Centers for Disease Control, which protect our citizens against contagious diseases as well as help communities combat chronic disease like diabetes and stroke, is funded at \$800 million above the request, with priority given to heart disease, stroke, diabetes, prescription drug abuse prevention and antibiotic resistance prevention. The bill includes \$390 million in funding dedicated to the Zika response effort and another \$300 million to create a new Infectious Diseases Rapid Response Reserve Fund, which will give the CDC director quick access to funding to respond to diseases like Ebola and Zika in the future -- without waiting for the congressional supplemental process.

We're all aware of the terrible toll that prescription drug and opioid abuse is taking on our nation. I'm proud to say this bill includes \$500 million for a new, first-of-its-kind, comprehensive grants program to enable states, localities and tribes to develop anti-opioid initiatives focused on prevention, education, treatment and recovery services.

Head Start receives a \$142 million increase in this bill, with a special focus on early Head Start for the most vulnerable children. Preschool programs are continued at \$250 million, and Child Care programs receive a \$40 million increase. Special education programs for students with disabilities are increased by over \$500 million, a 4% increase above current levels which will help local school districts ease the financial burden of providing specialized educational services. TRIO and GEARUP, which help disadvantaged students prepare for and complete college, receive a nearly 7 percent increase over last year.

The bill also includes \$1 billion for a new Student Support and Academic Enrichment program, created in the recently reauthorized education bill. These funds can be used flexibly by school districts across the country, whether the need is in the area of counseling, school climate, computer science instruction or other special curricula.

Pell grants are increased in the bill to a maximum grant of \$5,935 per student. Due to significant carryover funding in the Pell Grant program, we have been able to dedicate fewer new resources to this program in the bill this year while still maintaining this maximum grant increase.

The bill also protects the most vulnerable of our Nation's people by increasing funds for community services programs, the low-income home energy assistance programs, Meals on Wheels, job training programs and programs supporting Native Americans, veterans and people with disabilities. It fully fund the Administration's requests for Native American programs ranging from education to health care to improve services for a group that has historically been America's most neglected population.

The Chairman's mark also includes several provisions that will prevent this Administration from moving forward with various regulations that threaten to close down small businesses by imposing one-size-fits-all rules and costly mandates. The bill also demonstrates our support for the rights of all Americans, including our doctors and nurses, to be guided by their consciences in the performance of their jobs and not be forced to pay for, perform or refer for services they find morally objectionable. And the bill protects human life by continuing long-standing prohibitions against federal tax dollars being used to pay for abortions.

Finally this bill includes a provision that ensures not one dime of federal tax dollars provided to the Department of Health and Human Services through this bill can be spent to do any more work on the President's deeply flawed and unpopular health care law.

I'm proud of the bill I present to you today. It represents a balanced approach that will benefit every American and maintain appropriate stewardship of taxpayer dollars we have been entrusted with as Members of Congress.

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