

March 22nd, 2012

Subcommittee Ranking Member Rep. Rosa Delauro

Washington, DC— Congresswoman Rosa DeLauro (CT-3), Ranking Member on the Labor, Health, and Human Services Appropriations Subcommittee, made the following opening statement at the Committee's hearing with Secretary of Education Arne Duncan on the Department of Education's 2013 budget today. As Prepared for Delivery:

"Thank you, Mr. Chairman. And thank you, Mr. Secretary, for joining us today.

"As we think through the President's budget proposal for 2013, I think it is critical to remember the context in which it comes. This year's request arrives after two successive rounds of budget cutting. It comes as the House Majority is once again proposing a budget that asks the middle class to pay for more tax cuts for the wealthiest Americans, including by making significant cuts to investments in education.

"Under the 2012 legislation enacted in December, appropriations for the Department of Education – excluding Pell Grants – are 1.5 billion less than the comparable level two years earlier. That is the cut in actual dollar terms, without taking account of rising costs, growing population and student enrollment, or unusually high levels of need.

"An enormous number of critical programs and services have already been cut and in many cases – completely eliminated. Let me give just a few examples: Education Technology State Grants, Smaller Learning Communities, Civic Education, Teaching of Traditional American History, Foreign Language Assistance, Javits Fellowships. Even Start. The list seems to go on and on.

"Meanwhile, many of the foundational grant programs that are at the core of the Department's mission have simply been frozen. It goes without saying that, after considering rising student

enrollment, local and state budget cuts, and growing pressure to improve student achievement, providing level funding to these programs serves as an effective cut in services. I should note that, had the Majority had their way, these cuts to education would have been even more severe. A year ago we were debating H.R.1, the Chairman's proposed budget for the remainder of 2011, which would have cut federal education accounts by \$5 billion. 957,000 children would have lost Title I support, 482,000 children would have seen School Improvement Grant funding dry up, 196,000 children would have lost access to Head Start, and college students would have lost \$845 a year in Pell Grants. In the final 2012 budget, I was pleased to work with Chairman Rehberg to instead secure some modest increases for some of our education priorities, such as Title I, IDEA, and Promise Neighborhoods. But the 2013 budget proposal put forward by Budget Committee Chairman Ryan earlier this week argues for similarly deep cuts. It rolls education, job training, and social services into one budget function that is 20% less than 2012 levels. This is wrong. It does not make sense to roll back our critical investments in education, particularly at this delicate economic moment. If we want to create jobs, grow the economy, and reduce the deficit in the long-term, we have to maintain our investments in education, and work to ensure educational opportunity for all. Education – all types including vocational education, community colleges – is the key to our successfully navigating this transitioning economy.

"I am glad to see the Administration recognizes this by increasing the Education Department's budget by 2.5%. That said, I continue to be concerned with the emphasis on competitive grants in this budget, at the expense of formula funding. This 2013 request puts a full 18% of funding into competitive grants, a 50% increase from last year – Formula funds fall by \$1.2 billion, while competitive grants go up by \$2.8 billion.

"When we are looking at how we distribute these awards or measure programs' success, I also urge caution against an overemphasis on testing. A recent systematic study by the National Academy of Science concluded that test-based incentive programs have had little to no effect on student achievement, and that exit exams have depressed graduation rates by 2% with no impact on achievement. Testing can be a valuable diagnostic tool for identifying problems and determining how best to help a child succeed. But making tests rather than kids the centerpiece of the education system, and the one and only indicator of success or failure, is problematic.

"Instead, I believe we should be taking a more comprehensive approach to improving education. That means recognizing the profound impact that poverty has on learning, investing in early childhood education and afterschool programs, and ensuring that our kids have access to good nutrition, good health care, and good counseling.

"With that in mind, I am excited about the Early Learning Challenge Grants included that have already been awarded in nine states and look forward to seeing some great results. I also strongly support the administration's prioritization of early childhood in this year's budget proposal, as I firmly believe that earliest experiences are essential, and supportive environments critical, to long term outcomes for children.

"I am also glad to see that the President is continuing his effort to increase college access and affordability in this budget. Continued support of the Pell program is vital to these efforts – More than 9 million low-income students depend on this benefit to keep them in school, so that they can earn their degrees and find quality, well-paying jobs.

"Unfortunately, Pell Grants continue to be a target for both cuts and heated rhetoric by members of the Majority. In the national dialogue, some have been impugning the value of higher education, and telling students to aim for second best. Education is about telling people to reach for the stars, not to settle. It is the great equalizer, opening doors of opportunity to jobs, higher wages, and a better life for those who work hard. I hope today we can discuss how best to provide that opportunity to all students.

"In any event, on behalf of students in my district, and all across America, I want to thank you and the president for continuing to invest in education. It is the right thing to do, and it is what our economy needs. Thank you again for coming today, and I look forward to hearing your testimony."