

Opening Statement of Ranking Member Robert C. "Bobby" Scott (VA-03)

Full Committee Markup

H.R. 7082, the *Fostering Learning and Excellence in Charter Schools (FLEX) Act*;

H.R. 7086, the *Equitable Access to School Facilities Act*; and

H.R. 4624, the *Muhammad Ali American Boxing Revival Act*.

2175 Rayburn House Office Building

Wednesday, January 21, 2026 | 10:15 a.m.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Chairman, this week, the Joint Economic Committee released a new report finding that, in the year since President Trump returned to office, families spent an average of \$1,625 more due to inflation. Despite this troubling fact, today, we are marking up three bills that do nothing to lower the cost of living.

H.R. 7082, the *Fostering Learning and Excellence in Charter School Act*

We start with H.R. 7082, the *Fostering Learning and Excellence in Charter Schools Act*.

Current law sets clear objectives for the Charter Schools. Sixty-five percent of funds go to state entities—including state education departments, state charter school authorizing boards, and others—to support the start-up, replication, or expansion of high-quality charter schools through subgrants to charter developers, with oversight provisions built in to protect students and taxpayers.

However, this bill redirects the focus of the Program's focus, reducing those funds to 30 percent. At the same time, it broadens allowable uses such as adding or expanding "curricular or other offerings" and "new academic programs or delivery models" without defining those terms or what they mean.

Meanwhile, the remaining 35 percent of the funds can be distributed to the Charter School Programs at the Secretary's discretion. This would allow for a potentially significant increase in charter management organizations, meaning more money for larger, more established management organizations, less money for new charter developers and ideas, and less money that goes into actual schools for students and teachers. It reduces funding for technical assistance, dissemination of best practices, and evaluations while watering down what remains for other allowable uses, including facilities and planning. And it weakens transparency and oversight by eliminating interim reviews, reports, and peer review of subgrant applications to state entities.

Charter schools already close at far higher rates than traditional public schools, and audits have documented waste, fraud, and abuse. Instead of addressing the issues we know exist in the charter school system, this bill seeks to increase funding for charter school management organizations while reducing transparency and accountability. That is not flexibility—it's just negligence.

H.R. 7086, the *Equitable Access to School Facilities Act*

The next bill we will deal with is H.R. 7086, *the Equitable Access to School Facilities Act*.

Current law already supports charter facilities through credit enhancement through per-pupil aid. This bill would expand the role of state entities to assist in locating and accessing charter school facilities. It would also expand allowable uses of funds by charter school developers to include “repairs, renovations, and *building out* of charter school facilities”—though it does not define that term—to ensure building code compliance. And it narrows the reporting requirements under Credit Enhancement Grants by capping the number of years for which reports must be submitted, thereby reducing transparency and accountability.

Most notably, it replaces the per-pupil aid facilities program with a new state facilities aid program that lacks evaluation or oversight and establishes priorities that favor states that are already more charter-friendly and more charter facilities-friendly, effectively ensuring that the number of charter schools will continue to grow quickly in those states.

I cannot help but find this troublesome because it waives current accountability rules and creates a new, expansive program without mechanisms to ensure effective measures to prevent misuse.

If facilities are truly a priority, accountability should increase—not disappear.

H.R. 4624, the *Muhammad Ali American Boxing Revival Act*

Finally, the Committee will consider *H.R. 4624, the Muhammad Ali American Boxing Revival Act*.

I want to begin by acknowledging the good-faith conversations we engaged in with staff to staff. While some progress has been made in a short time, we were unable to reach a total agreement largely because of the needless rush to markup the bill today.

This program allows for a new kind of business model in boxing called a “Unified Boxing Organization.” But the U-B-O, as it’s called, does not have to play by all the same rules as those currently in the sport. For example, current law protects boxers from exploitation by separating promoters, sanctioning bodies, and managers, and by prohibiting coercive contracts. These same protections do not currently apply to the UBO.

I understand that amendments may be offered to fix the remaining big deficiencies in this bill. I urge my colleagues to support those amendments.

Finally, I would also note that, while Committee Republicans rushed to prioritize this boxing bill as the very first labor bill we are considering in 2026. They have, regrettably, not shown the same urgency in this Congress when it comes to considering labor bills that raise workers’ wages or make life more affordable or make working conditions safer.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and I yield back the balance of my time.