

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

Full Committee Markup

H.R. 2616, the PROTECT KIDS Act

H.R. 2617, the Say No to Indoctrination Act

H.Res.237, Of inquiry requesting the President and directing the Secretary of Education to transmit, respectively, certain documents to the House of Representatives relating to the reduction in force and other downsizing measures at the Department of Education

H.R. 2262, the Flexibility for Workers Education Act

H.R. 2270, the Empowering Employer Child and Elder Care Solutions Act

2175 Rayburn House Office Building

Wednesday, April 09, 2025 | 10:15 a.m.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Today, we will consider five bills that could impact millions of American students, workers, and families: three education bills, two of which will continue to wage Republican culture wars in our classrooms, and two labor bills that incentivize people to work more to get paid less.

First, we will consider *H.R. 2616, the PROTECT KIDS Act*. This bill forces schools to obtain consent from parents before a child can change their pronouns, effectively outing students. While many parents would be supportive, that is not always the case. Studies show LGBTQ youth are more likely to experience homelessness, with family rejection being the leading cause. We should focus on providing quality education and mental health resources, not needlessly bullying some of our most vulnerable students and making them more vulnerable than they are.

Next, we will consider *H.R. 2617, the Say No to Indoctrination Act*, which prohibits the use of federal funds to teach whatever 'gender ideology' is.

It is surreal that we are even debating these bills. The Administration is *literally* trying to abolish the Department of Education (ED) right now. It feels as if Rome is burning, and my colleagues are "fiddling." Neither of these bills addresses any widespread issues in education. Instead, they are vehicles for my colleagues to continue ranting about culture wars.

That is why my colleagues and I introduced the next resolution we are considering, *H. R. 237*, our resolution requesting documents from the Administration about their plans to dismantle the Department.

This resolution of inquiry is simply a call for transparency and accountability. It isn't gaslighting anything. We are simply asking what in the world is going on. President Trump and Secretary McMahon are actively dismantling the Department, they nearly dismantled half of the staff. This resolution does not ask the Administration to do anything. We are just asking them to share how they intend to dismantle the Department while still carrying out its essential duties, such as providing support to schools to ensure all students have access to high-quality education regardless of their zip code.

One of the biggest alarm bells for me was the decision to fire almost half of the staff at the Office for Civil Rights and close half of their regional offices. How is it more efficient to give half the staff twice the amount of work? And how will this not impact students' ability to seek recourse if they are victims of discrimination or harassment?

Also, what is the President's plan to transfer the student loan portfolio to the Small Business Administration (SBA) or IDEA to Health and Human Services (HHS)? How will this move not make it harder for students to repay their loans? What expertise does HHS have in enforcing civil rights for students with disabilities in schools?

Under the Constitution, we have a responsibility to ensure the Executive Branch faithfully implements the laws written by Congress. We cannot bury our heads in the sand and allow this Administration to undermine almost every program our constituents rely on.

So, I urge my colleagues to support this resolution so that we can get this information.

Next, we are considering two labor-related bills. Both are based on a cynical and flawed premise that to provide workers with certain opportunities or benefits, employers must be able to pay them less. *H.R. 2262, the Flexibility for Workers Education Act*, would relieve employers of the responsibility to pay employees for training outside of regular working hours.

Specifically, it would allow employers to hold training for a worker's job after hours and off the clock as long as they do not say that it is technically required. However, they can still lead workers to believe the training is required and get away with not paying for the time. For this reason, I oppose this bill and would encourage my colleagues to do the same.

Finally, *H.R. 2270, the Empowering Employer Child and Elder Care Solutions Act*, appears to support families by encouraging businesses to help with child and elder care. However, in practice, the bill only incentivizes employers to pressure employees to work longer hours – keeping them away from their families for more hours and increasing their need for care.

The irony is that the Administration is simultaneously dismantling the Office of Child Care, which made child care more affordable for 1.8 million children in 2021, and dissolving the Administration for Community Living completely, leaving the future of the *Older Americans Act* programs uncertain. This bill risks worsening the challenges families face without addressing the core issue: and that is access to affordable care.

Additionally, the problem my Republican colleagues are trying to address through this bill will only be exacerbated by their proposed cuts to Medicaid to fund tax cuts for the wealthy and well-connected. Many Americans rely on Medicaid to receive essential care, from support for children with disabilities to services for senior citizens. Medicaid covers five in eight nursing home residents, and Medicaid accounts for more than half of all spending on long-term care nationally. While my colleagues argue that concerns over these cuts are merely fearmongering, the Congressional Budget Office (CBO) has confirmed that cutting Medicaid is the only option to achieve the goals laid out in the budget resolution.

If there has been a change of heart about these cuts, I will gladly support that shift. In the meantime, I oppose H.R. 2270 and would encourage my colleagues to do so as well.

Before we end, I would like to make one last point. This is our second markup this Congress, and we still have not taken up our bipartisan, bicameral agreement reauthorizing the *Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act*. I hope, Mr. Chairman, that we can get a commitment from you to bring this bill up as soon as reasonably

possible. Since it had been agreed upon and we almost passed it last December, it's one thing we actually agree on, and we can get something done.

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