



Opening Statement

COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION & LABOR

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The Hon. Robert C. "Bobby" Scott • Chairman

Opening Statement of Chairwoman Susan Davis (CA-53)

Joint Subcommittee on Early Childhood, Elementary, and Secondary Education & Subcommittee on Higher Education and Workforce Investment Hearing

Educating our Educators: How Federal Policy Can Better Support Teachers and School Leaders

2175 Rayburn House Office Building

Wednesday, July 17, 2019 | 10:15 a.m.

Thank you, Ranking Member Allen, for yielding. I am pleased that we are having today's hearing on how to best support our educators and provide our children with high-quality classroom and school instruction.

Today, we are not only discussing the need to invest in teacher preparation, but also the need to invest in school leader preparation.

In fact, studies show that effective school leadership is one of the most consistent factors behind teachers' decisions to stay or leave a school, or the profession entirely. Teachers who feel unsupported by their school leaders are nearly twice as likely to leave. At the same time, we know that effective school leadership significantly improves students' academic performance, particularly in reading and math. Despite the clear benefits of strong school leadership for both teachers and students, school leader preparation receives little attention compared to teacher preparation.

That is why our *Aim Higher Act* last Congress expanded key teacher preparation grants to include proven school leader preparation programs that provide participants with graduate-level coursework as well as ongoing supports while on the job.

But we also know that professional training for teachers and school leaders can only go so far without support to help educators overcome the significant cost barriers to entering and staying in the profession.

Today, the gap between teacher wages and the wages of other college graduates is wider than it's ever been. One recent study found that teachers with as much as 10 years of experience and who are their family's breadwinners may need federal financial support. This gap is particularly devastating for teachers of color, who already shoulder disproportionately more student debt than their white peers. As a result, our teacher workforce lacks diversity, which research shows can hurt students' academic outcomes.

For decades, Congress has recognized its responsibility to eliminate cost barriers to serving as a teacher, particularly regarding student loans. Today, qualified teachers can receive federal student loan relief through Public Service Loan Forgiveness, for teaching in low-income schools, and for teaching in the special education and STEM fields.

Nonetheless, continued financial barriers to becoming a teacher demonstrate that Congress must do more. As this Committee works to reauthorize the *Higher Education Act*, we must consider the provisions included in the *Aim Higher Act* to make college more affordable, and student debt easier to repay, for our educators. These

provisions include streamlining student loan repayment and expanding the PSLF program to ensure that educators and other public servants are not burdened by debt.

Each day, we rely on teachers and school administrators to shape the future of our country. If we are to provide our children with the best education possible, we must ensure that educators do not face overbearing cost barriers and inadequate preparation that prevent them from doing what they do best: empowering our children to reach their full potential.

Thank you, again, to our witnesses for joining us today. I now yield to the Ranking Member of the Subcommittee on Higher Education and Workforce Investment, Mr. Smucker, to make an opening statement.