

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

Full Committee Markup

*H.R. 8476, No Antisemitism in Education Act of 2026*

*H.R. 4795, Protect Economic and Academic Freedom Act of 2025*

*H.R. 9203, Student Protection and University Accountability Act*

*H.R. 2555, Freedom of Association in Higher Education Act of 2025*

*H.R. 5505, Equal Campus Access Act of 2025*

*H.R. 2332, States Handling Access to Reciprocity for Employment (SHARE) Act of 2025*

*H.R. 4122, Health Care for Energy Workers Act of 2025*

*H.R. 8822, Federal Workers' Compensation Integrity and Care Act*

*H.R. 8823, Putting Patients First by Strengthening Provider Accountability in FECA Act*

*H.R. 9381, AI Workforce Assessment and Research Enhancement (AWARE) Act*

*H.R. 9228, Health Data Access, Transparency, and Affordability Act of 2026*

2175 Rayburn House Office Building

Thursday, June 26, 2026, at 10:15 a.m.

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Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Chairman, this Committee has immense responsibility to pass legislation that ensures students receive a quality education, protects workers, and expands access to affordable, quality health care. While I appreciate the bipartisan work reflected in some of the measures before us, several of these bills, unfortunately, continue a pattern of advancing divisive political priorities, weakening protections that workers, students, [and] families rely on, and [engaging in] other divisive activities. Moreover, they do not address America's number one concern right now, and that is the rising cost of living.

We will start with considering perhaps the most divisive proposal before us today. I would like to start the discussion by acknowledging that discrimination in any form has no place in America.

Currently, under Title VI of the *Civil Rights Act of 1964*, religion is not considered a protected class, and the only exception [is] when one's religion is associated with a person's national origin or shared ancestry.

However, H.R. 8476, the *No Antisemitism in Education Act*, seeks to add antisemitism to this exception and does so using vague language that elevates a particular definition of antisemitism above others. It is unclear how this would even work. Discrimination usually means treating one group of people different[ly] from another. For example, racial discrimination results when one group is treated differently from another on account of race. No definition of motive is involved, just disparate treatment. For some reason, this bill uses one definition of antisemitism over others in an effort that does not even address the disparate treatment.

Furthermore, it elevates antisemitism above anti-Sikhism and Islamophobia, which, like antisemitism, often presents as discrimination based on shared interests or it elevates it above any other religious discrimination. If this bill is adopted as written, it would create preferential treatment [for] some within the protected class of

religion over others and create serious constitutional questions involving the establishment clause and equal protection.

For these reasons, I oppose H.R. 8476 and urge my colleagues to do so as well.

The next proposal before us is the H.R. 4795, the *Protect Economic and Academic Freedom Act of 2025*. Title IV of the *Higher Education Act* (HEA) is the largest source of federal funding for America's colleges and universities. However, this bill would strip schools of access to these federal funds if they [were] deemed to be engaging in, I assume, the Boycott, Divest, and Sanctions (BDS) Movement. Although it doesn't say so in the bill.

While there have been faculty senates and student organizations that support the BDS movement, their position does not represent that of their school. In fact, 38 states have some form of anti-BDS laws on their books, and there has not been a single documented case of a college administration adopting a BDS policy as described in this bill.

Ultimately, this bill is obviously a solution in search of a problem and seeks to punish schools in an effort to curb free speech.

Next, we'll consider H.R. 9203, the *Student Protection and University Accountability Act*. This bill would amend the *Higher Education Act* to add transparency and compliance requirements in relation to Title VI of the *Civil Rights Act of 1964*.

While I can appreciate the author's stated intent to improve Title VI investigations, the Office of Federal Student Aid (FSA) is not the office [that] should be determining whether a school is living up to its civil rights obligations. This is the work of the Department of Education's (ED) Office for Civil Rights (OCR). In the Trump Administration's attempts to dismantle the Department, it has made drastic cuts to OCR and recently signed an Interagency Agreement to move most of the substantive work of OCR to the Department of Justice. The resulting chaos, confusion, and staffing shortages mean OCR will not have adequate resources to defend students' civil rights.

If we want to strengthen civil rights enforcement in education, having FSA do the work is not the answer. Title VI has its own enforcement and sanction provisions. We need to fully fund OCR so it can do the work it's tasked to do.

Next on the docket will be H.R. 2555, the *Freedom of Association in Higher Education Act of 2025*.

The bill would amend the *Higher Education Act* to ensure that students receive the same academic, social, and athletic opportunities regardless of their membership in, or lack thereof, single-sex organizations. This has long been a bipartisan priority. And the bill, as introduced, was supported on both sides of the aisle. But an 11<sup>th</sup> hour addition of unnecessary poison pills [were put in] the Amendment in the Nature of Substitute and calls that bipartisan support into question.

I hope the Committee can work its will on the bill to get it back to where it was to begin with, and that is to make sure that colleges cannot punish students simply for exercising their right to associate as they choose.

The next bill is H.R.5505, the *Equal Campus Access Act of 2025*, which would amend HEA to prohibit public colleges and universities from denying religious organizations benefits afforded to other organizations because of their religious beliefs. While I understand the author's stated intent, its implications are potentially alarming because the bill would undermine an institution's other nondiscrimination policies and potentially shield student groups who claim to be religious from consequences for discriminatory conduct. For example, an organization

could prevent women from holding leadership positions if it claims that the conduct is in line with its religious beliefs.

So, I'll oppose H.R. 5505 and encourage my colleagues to do as well.

The next [bill] would be H.R. 2332, the *States Handling Access to Reciprocity for Employment (SHARE) Act*. The bill H.R. 2332 requires the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) to provide criminal history record information to states participating in occupational licensure interstate compacts. This bill would eliminate inconsistent interpretations by the FBI and allow these compacts to operate as intended and allow states to get access to criminal background checks, whether or not they're in a compact.

I support the bill and urge my colleagues to do the same.

Next, we will consider another bipartisan proposal, H.R. 4122, the *Health Care for Energy Workers Act*. Under the *Energy Employees Occupational Illness Compensation Program Act*, only physicians may independently prescribe treatment and certify that care is medically necessary for beneficiaries, even in states where nurse practitioners and physician assistants are authorized to practice independently. This bill allows nurse practitioners and physician assistants to provide direct care under the program wherever state law permits them to practice independently. The bill does not alter any scope-of-practice laws.

This common-sense legislation expands access to care, particularly for workers living in rural areas, reduces treatment delays, and aligns this program with many other federal health programs that already recognize qualified nurse practitioners and physician assistants as independent providers.

So, I support the bill, and I urge my colleagues to do the same.

The next two bills we will consider are H.R. 8822 and 8823.

Under current law, federal agencies responsible for administering workers' compensation and disability benefits do not consistently share data. As a result, injured workers might receive overpayments that are often discovered years later, long after the money has been spent. Additionally, while the Labor Department can exclude providers from the *Federal Employees' Compensation Act* (FECA) program after a fraud conviction, it lacks clear authority to suspend pending payments to these providers.

H.R. 8822 authorizes data sharing between the Department of Labor, the Social Security Administration, and the National Directory of New Hires to verify earnings and benefit information and improve benefit administration.

H.R. 8823 authorizes the Secretary of Labor to suspend FECA payments to providers convicted of criminal fraud involving FECA or other federal and state health care benefit programs, including Medicare and Medicaid.

Together, these bills improve access to care, protect [injured] workers, safeguard taxpayer dollars, and help ensure federal benefits are administered fairly and efficiently.

For those reasons, I support both of those bills.

Next bill we will consider H.R. 9228, the *Health DATA Act*. The bill addresses "gag clauses" that prevent health plan fiduciaries from overseeing their service providers. Regrettably, the Majority has abandoned the Committee's past bipartisan work on this issue and has made changes that do not include input from the bill's original sponsor during the 118<sup>th</sup> Congress, the gentleman from California, Mr. Takano.

Due to these changes, the bill now lacks safeguards to ensure that plan data is utilized for appropriate purposes. Instead, it provides an open-ended right for employers to access data, including employee medical records, without ensuring de-identification so that individuals are protected from discrimination. While I wholeheartedly share the goal of providing tools for plan fiduciaries to hold service providers accountable, H.R. 9228 does not strike the proper balance between transparency and privacy. These goals can be achieved as they were in last year's bill, but this version ignores the legitimate privacy rights that should be protected.

Therefore, oppose H.R. 9228 and urge my colleagues to do the same.

The last bill before us is H.R. 9381, the *AI Workforce Assessment and Research Enhancement Act*.

The bill would require the Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) to collect data on how businesses use artificial intelligence (AI). While we can all agree that using data to understand AI's impact on the economy is important, this bill tasks the already underfunded BLS with data collection work that is largely already being performed by other agencies, without providing any additional funds for the work. For example, the Census Bureau's Business Trends and Outlook Survey already asks employers questions relating to AI, producing results every two weeks.

Researchers already have an immense amount [of] data to continue monitoring the use of AI in our economy. This bill would force the BLS to conduct duplicative work and divert resources from its core duties, directly diverting resources from those currently devoted to [its] other responsibilities, like employment and price data.

So, I oppose H.R. 9381 and urge my colleagues to do the same.

Lastly, Mr. Chairman, I would like to address a troubling pattern. This is the second time that my colleagues across the aisle have taken bipartisan work, repackaged and altered the bills in ways contrary to bipartisan objectives, and [re]introduced the bills under the same bill name with partisan results. It's my hope that this will not be a common practice by my colleagues.

And with that, I yield back.