

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

Full Committee Markup

H.R. 1048, Defending Education Transparency and Ending Rogue Regimes Engaging in Nefarious Transactions Act

H.R. 649, Whole Milk for Healthy Kids Act of 2025

H.R. 1069, Promoting Responsible Oversight to Eliminate Communist Teachings for Our Kids Act

H.R. 1005, Combating the Lies of Authoritarians in School Systems Act

H.R. 1049, Transparency in Reporting of Adversarial Contributions to Education Act

2175 Rayburn House Office Building

Wednesday, February 12, 2025 | 10:15 a.m.

Thank you, Chairman Walberg. Today, we are here to mark up four education bills and one nutrition-related bill.

With regard to the education bills, it is hard to overlook the glaring irony in today's markup. My Republican colleagues have either been silent or are actively supporting the dismantling of the Department of Education, a goal that is promoted in the guidebook called Project 2025, page 352. For those pushing this damaging policy, the argument rests on the perception that the federal government is *too* involved in our schools. And here we are marking up bills that would give the Department of Education more responsibility to impose unfunded mandates and interfere with local schools.

We recently received disappointing school achievement scores and so the Republicans are responding by abolishing the Department of Education. But then what? Is the tendency to just complain but not do anything so you've abolishing the Department of Education, then what? There's no plan to improve academic achievement.

In fact, the Administration is making it harder to improve public education. Earlier this week, the Trump Administration permitted Elon Musk and the "Department of Government Efficiency" or (DOGE) to sabotage the work of the Institute of Education Sciences – a place that produces high-quality research and is used to improve our public schools.

So, the proposals we are considering today will not actually improve students' education and outcomes. We are considering a series of bills that only add complexity and confusion and, frankly, are solutions in search of a problem.

For example, *H.R.1048* creates an arbitrary, potentially discriminatory approach targeting certain countries and their researchers. By focusing on nationality rather than security risks, this bill undermines the international collaborations that have historically advanced fields like health and technology. As I've said before, we can address these concerns without undermining the trust between our institutions and our global partners.

Next, *H.R. 649* would allow whole milk to be served in school lunches, disregarding science-based nutrition standards which are not developed by the Obama Administration but by evidence-based recommendations from the Dietary Guidelines for Americans (DGAs). These recommendations focus on the health of our children.

Instead, this bill undermines efforts to align school meal programs with the latest science-based nutritional findings. It is especially disheartening that this legislation is being considered at a time when Republicans are reportedly considering significant cuts in SNAP benefits and to the school meal program that would take free meals *away* from hungry children.

Then there's *H.R. 1069*, which would place unnecessary restrictions on public schools if they received any financial contributions, teaching materials, or other resources from China. However, there is no clear evidence that there is even any significant foreign influence in K-12 schools, and this bill fails to address any actual threats even if they did exist.

H.R. 1005 and *H.R. 1049* are just as problematic. They add layers of bureaucracy and impose excessive reporting requirements on schools without providing the necessary support or funding for schools to comply. My colleagues have historically called these types of bills "unfunded mandates." Instead of addressing our schools' real challenges—such as widening achievement gaps as revealed in the NAEP data released in January, teacher shortages, and improving school infrastructure—these bills will only create more administrative burdens.

And so, I would like to emphasize that it does not make sense to advocate for the dismantling of the Department of Education, but then advance bills that include more responsibility for the Secretary of Education. Let's be clear. Today's bills do nothing to improve schools' NAEP scores, do nothing to improve child hunger, or, as my colleagues on the other side of the aisle purport, reduce adverse foreign influence. Instead, they will only create more administrative hurdles, complicate the problems we face in education, and fuel misinformation.

Mr. Chairman, I will be opposing these bills and urge my colleagues to oppose them. With that, I yield back the balance of my time.