



## **GAO Report: Students in Poorer and Smaller Schools Have Less Access to Courses That Help Prepare Them for College**

Ranking Member Bobby Scott (VA-03) requested that the Government Accountability Office (GAO) investigate the disparities in college preparation due to high school enrollment and course offerings in high school. *The GAO found that students in relatively poor and small schools have less access to high school courses that help prepare them for college.*

### **Key Findings**

#### ***Students in relatively poor schools have less access to high school courses that help prepare them for college and a successful career.***

- High-poverty schools were less likely to offer the math and science courses that most public four-year colleges expect students to take in high school. More broadly, access to advanced math and science courses decreased as school poverty increased.
- These disparities disproportionately affect Black and Latinx students, students with disabilities, and English learners, because they are more likely to attend high-poverty schools.
- The admissions process is challenging for students in high-poverty schools and acts a barrier to the long-term benefits of higher education. Higher levels of education are associated with higher lifetime earnings.

#### ***Poverty often has profound and lasting effects on students' academic performance.***

- Living in poverty is linked to negative conditions for children at home and in schools. This includes substandard housing, homelessness, inadequate nutrition, food insecurity, and unsafe neighborhoods.
- Poverty, and the chronic stress associated with poverty, has a particularly adverse effect on the academic outcomes of children beginning in early childhood and continuing throughout their academic careers.

#### ***Smaller schools and certain types of schools, such as charter schools, are less likely to offer the math and science courses that many colleges look for during the admissions process.***

- Larger high schools offer more advanced math and science courses than smaller schools, regardless of poverty level.
- Charter schools offered fewer advanced math and science courses than traditional and magnet schools, regardless of poverty level.