



# OPENING STATEMENT

House Committee on Education and Labor

Chairman Robert C. "Bobby" Scott

## Opening Statement of Chair Wilson (FL-24)

Subcommittees on Early Childhood, Elementary and Secondary Education and Higher Education and Workforce Investments

*"Examining the Implementation of COVID-19 Education Funds"*

Zoom

Wednesday, November 17, 2021 | 10:15 a.m

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Thank you, Chair Sablan, for hosting this hearing and providing an opportunity to discuss how higher education institutions have used the Education Stabilization Fund to reopen their campuses safely, address the urgent needs of students, and cover the added operating costs during the pandemic.

The economic fallout from COVID-19 has exacerbated the challenges our students and institutions face. Across the U.S., colleges and universities experienced sharp declines in enrollment, severe funding cuts, and revenue losses due to campus closures that were necessary to stop the spread of the virus.

In response, Congress provided more than \$75 billion in funding to institutions through three COVID-19 relief bills, including the *American Rescue Plan Act*. Importantly, institutions were required to use at least half of the funding they received to provide emergency financial aid grants personally to students.

For students across the nation, the American Rescue Plan funding has helped prevent homelessness and hunger for our students.

For institutions, the American Rescue Plan funding helped offset revenue losses and supported efforts to test for, track, and mitigate the spread of COVID-19.

In my district, Florida International University used these funds to respond to pandemic related challenges in real time, including to set up a COVID-19 testing lab, establish a prevention and response team to carry out contact tracing, conduct outreach to their campus community on best practices, and meet the technology needs of faculty and staff that were attending classes or working remotely.

Children were given cash money to help them through this pandemic; needy students, sometimes twice, and it's ongoing.

The investments we delivered to colleges and universities provided a lifeline to students and may have prevented the financial collapse of our higher education system. The Education Department must continue to ensure that institutions are using this funding responsibly to support their students, faculty, and staff, and that states are holding up their end of the bargain by maintaining their investments in higher education.

Quality higher education remains the surest pathway to the middle class for Americans across the country. Congress and the Education Department must work together to help students and institutions fully recover from this pandemic and to continue expanding access to the life changing benefits that come with a quality degree.

I look forward to hearing Mr. Kvaal's ["KUH-WALL"] and Ms. Marten's plans to continue strengthening oversight and ensuring that our investments provide students access to a safe, affordable, and quality education.

I am now pleased to yield to the distinguished Ranking Member of the Higher Education and Workforce Investments Subcommittee, Dr. Murphy, to make his opening statement.