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## **Rep. George Miller (D-CA) Opening Statement for the Markup of H.R. 3989 and H.R. 3990**

*WASHINGTON, D.C. – Below are the prepared remarks of U.S. Rep. George Miller (D-CA), the ranking member of the House Committee on Education and the Workforce for the committee markup on H.R. 3989 and H.R. 3990.*

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Today our committee meets to consider legislation that will turn the clock back decades on equity and accountability in American public education. These bills are not a serious attempt to reauthorize the Elementary and Secondary Education Act.

A serious attempt to rewrite ESEA would involve consensus building and bipartisanship. It would recognize that the federal government has an obligation to ensure that all children have equal access to a quality education.

It would not turn its back on the civil rights promise of this nation: that every child deserves a fair shot at success, no matter their background. These are not quaint sentiments. They are not pipedreams. Ensuring an excellent education for all children is our duty. The laws we make here must be tightly focused on that goal.

Building a consensus around that goal is not easy. But it is critical. Consensus building ensures buy-in from stakeholders. It ensures reforms will take hold on the ground and work. That's why I have urged Chairman Kline and the House Republicans to work with Democrats on a bipartisan bill.

Instead, the majority has chosen a highly partisan process.

And for that reason, to my deep disappointment, No Child Left Behind will likely remain the law of the land. This is unacceptable. The law is in desperate need of a rewrite. Kids can't wait, communities can't wait, and our nation can't wait. But while bipartisanship would make a successful reauthorization more likely, I do not oppose these bills because they are partisan.

Democrats and the majority of the education community oppose these bills because they shortchange students and fail to fix the real problems with No Child Left Behind. And there are real problems with NCLB.

That is why roughly 25 states today are submitting new plans for flexibility under NCLB. These states join 11 others leading the charge on education reform. They are looking to the future by protecting children, raising standards and holding themselves accountable.

This is good news. We should be embracing their drive toward accountability, not turning our backs. And so the debate today will show two clear choices for the direction of our nation's education system.

The Republican proposals will take our education system back decades.

The Democratic proposals will take our education system forward and will support all students having access to a 21st century education. Given the urgent need to fix current law and to address the fatal flaws of these proposed bills, Democrats will offer a comprehensive solution.

We will be offering just one amendment to each of the Republican bills.

These amendments do not solve every issue or present every Democratic priority. But they address the fundamental shortcomings of the Republican bills and the key daunting challenges of current law. We are not alone in questioning the Republicans' approach.

Teachers, business groups like the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, local education groups, civil rights and disability groups, and the national PTA have all raised deep concerns over the Republican bills.

What is clear is that the Republican bills eliminate critical supports and accountability to provide a balanced and effective education to every child. The Republican bills dismantle equity in education for all students regardless of poverty, disability, or other challenges.

The Republican bills send an unambiguous signal that college and career readiness is not a national priority. These bills send us in the wrong direction.

Democrats will attempt to fix the fatal flaws of these partisan bills. And at the same time, show a path forward for the reauthorization. While we invite support from the other side of the aisle to address these flaws, Democrats will not support amendments that fail to comprehensively fix the problems with the underlying bill or current law.

It is not enough just to add back science standards when the bill's standards and assessments are meaningless and they don't give parents and communities actionable information. It is not enough to strike or adjust voucher provisions if the bills still fail to provide taxpayers with accountability for how funds are being spent.

It is not enough to change the Title I formula if we aren't also going to increase funding or add back maintenance of effort requirements so that districts and states don't lose resources during these difficult economic times. Small, siloed amendments won't fix such fundamentally flawed bills.

Tweaks around the edges won't move the public education system forward, and most importantly they won't create a bill that puts students first.

We cannot accept the status quo when students are held to a lower standard inside the classroom because of their life outside of the classroom. And we cannot accept the status quo when low-performing schools steal the future of children who just happened to be born into the wrong ZIP code.

These are all issues that Democrats will address in our amendments.

The Democratic amendments will:

- Support college and career-ready standards and high-quality assessments;
- Support a state-driven accountability and school improvement system modeled after the NCLB waivers that nearly 40 states are signing up to participate in;
- Ensure students with disabilities remain in the accountability system and aren't held to low standards as they are in the Republican bill;
- Restore the important role of science in education;
- And restore individual programs for English Language Learners, migrant students, neglected and delinquent students, Indian students and rural students;

The Democratic amendments will support a high quality teacher and principal evaluation, improving working conditions for teachers, and improving equitable distribution of effective teachers to the students that need them most.

And they will restore support for consolidated funding streams for literacy, STEM, wrap-around services, a well-rounded education and 21st Century Community Learning Centers to support programs that schools need most and provide taxpayers with accountability for how federal funds are spent.

Now is the time to work together to comprehensively reauthorize ESEA.

This is about every child in our country.

Their futures should not be held hostage to an ideological exercise about whether there should be a federal role in education. No, we should be concerned about whether children are being given a fair chance at a future of their choice.

We should be concerned about whether they are being held back by a system that isn't held accountable for supporting their potential. The highly partisan bills being marked up today blatantly ignore the challenges our country faces.

I urge my colleagues to reject these bills and instead support a comprehensive approach to rewriting NCLB that puts children over ideology.

<http://democrats.edworkforce.house.gov>