

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

Statement by Miguel Cardona

Secretary of Education

on the

U.S. Department of Education Fiscal Year 2025 Budget Request

Chairwoman Foxx and Ranking Member Scott and distinguished Members of the Committee. I am pleased to join you today, and I am proud to testify on President Biden's fiscal year (FY) 2025 Budget Request for the Department of Education. As an educator and a father, I know that nothing unites America's families more than the hopes we share for our children, and that is why the Biden-Harris Administration continues to push for increased investments to ensure all students have equitable access to schools, colleges, and educators that welcome and support them, inspire their love of learning, and prepare them to succeed in whichever career they choose.

The President's FY 2025 Budget continues the historic progress made since the President took office—with nearly 15 million jobs created and inflation down two-thirds—by lowering costs for working families; protecting and strengthening Social Security and Medicare; investing in America and the American people; and reducing the deficit by cracking down on fraud, cutting wasteful spending, and making the wealthy and corporations pay their fair share. This is a budget that unapologetically strives to raise the bar for education in America and position our nation to lead the world for years to come. Even in an era of relative restraint, where we currently find ourselves operating within the discretionary caps of the Fiscal Responsibility Act (FRA), we're continuing to push for additional, critical resources that will: 1) Achieve Academic Excellence; 2) Boldly Improve Learning Conditions; 3) Create Pathways for Global Engagement; and 4) Expand Access to Higher Education by Reducing Costs for Students and Investing in Student Supports.

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION TOPLINE REQUEST AND BASELINE

The discretionary request for Department of Education programs is \$82.4 billion, an increase of \$3.3 billion over the FY 2024 enacted level. However, since final appropriations were not completed by the time of the budget release, the baseline for our FY 2025 request levels was the FY 2023 enacted level, and the FY 2025 request submitted does not reflect final FY 2024 appropriations action. We look forward to working with Congress to provide technical assistance during upcoming FY 2025 appropriations action for appropriate review of the Administration's proposal, including how FY 2025 requests compare with final FY 2024 enacted levels.

ACHIEVING ACADEMIC EXCELLENCE

Title I funding is absolutely essential to our efforts to ensure every student achieves academic excellence. To date, and in partnership with Congress, the Biden-Harris Administration has grown Title I funding for schools supporting students from low-income backgrounds by \$1.9 billion—expanding the base of this crucial funding to close opportunity and achievement gaps in our nation's schools and sustain our academic recovery from the impacts of the pandemic. Our request, operating within the constraints of the FRA, calls for a \$200 million increase in FY 2025 over FY 2023 and \$180 million more than the FY 2024 level, for a total request of \$18.6 billion. The Request also includes critical updates to ensure States have the resources they need to effectively administer the Title I program and ensure every student receives an excellent education.

The President and I remain committed to ensuring that children and youth with disabilities receive the services and support they need to thrive in school and graduate ready for college and career. The Budget Request reflects that commitment through a significant boost in support for children with disabilities. We are requesting \$15.7 billion for special education programs, a more than \$200 million increase above the FY 2023 enacted level and \$190 million

more than FY 2024 enacted. This includes \$14.4 billion for IDEA Part B Grants to States, \$200 million more than FY 2023 enacted (\$180 million more than FY 2024 enacted), and \$425 million for Preschool Grants, \$5 million more than FY 2023 and FY 2024 enacted. Our request also includes \$545 million for the IDEA Part C Infants and Families program, \$5 million more than FY 2023 and FY 2024 enacted. However, despite these requested increases there remains a nearly \$31 billion annual gap between current funding levels and what is widely considered to be full funding of IDEA, and that is why the Administration continues to support legislation that achieves full funding over the next 10 years such as the IDEA Full Funding Act.

With the obligation deadline for the last of COVID-19 supplemental education funding in September 2024, we are proposing a new Academic Acceleration and Achievement Grants program, which would help bridge the gap between the crucial recovery work that American Rescue Plan dollars provided to sustained academic acceleration and achievement efforts in the long run. This mandatory proposal would provide \$8 billion over years to help Title I and Title I-eligible schools—including those in an improvement status and especially hard hit by the COVID-19 pandemic—to improve opportunities and outcomes for underserved students through a variety of proven, evidence-based strategies, including: increasing student attendance and engagement; providing high-quality, high-dosage tutoring; and expanding summer, extended, or afterschool learning time.

The Budget proposes a new \$25 million demonstration program to incentivize school districts to expand high-quality public preschool in schools and community-based settings, including by leveraging existing federal investments like Head Start and Title I. This new investment complements the mandatory funding proposal also included in the President's Budget (at the Department of Health and Human Services, in partnership with the Department of Education), which would provide assistance to every State to establish and expand high-quality free preschool, through a federal-state partnership.

BOLDLY IMPROVING LEARNING CONDITIONS

Every student should have access to outstanding, well-prepared, well-supported educators who reflect the rich diversity of our nation. Our budget makes significant investments in educator recruitment, preparation, retention, and professional learning, improving resources and support for America's teachers and school leaders to expand their impact within and beyond their classrooms. This includes \$2.9 billion in educator preparation, development, and leadership—an increase of nearly \$100 million over FY 2023 levels and \$200 million over FY 2024 levels—including \$30 million in Hawkins and \$95 million in Teacher Quality Partnerships to build a diverse and well-prepared teacher pipeline, and \$125 million to address shortages of special education teachers and providers. The Budget also supports an expansion of \$17 million in the National Professional Development program to help shore up the pipeline of bilingual educators, as well as \$5 million in graduate fellowships for faculty in high-need areas.

Improving learning conditions also means acknowledging that communities with high rates of poverty need comprehensive services to support and sustain student well-being and improved academic outcomes. Schools are ideally situated to provide such supports, which is why I am requesting \$200 million to expand Full-Service Community Schools, an increase of \$50 million over FY 2023 and FY 2024 enacted levels, to meet increasing demand for the program. I am requesting a total of \$216 million for School Safety National Activities, which will provide \$40 million in new funding to meet the mental health needs of our students, school staff, and teachers and build on the Administration's historic progress in increasing the number of school counselors, school psychologists, social workers, and other health professionals serving our students within schools. Already, the Department has obligated \$571 million in mental health programs for K-12 schools, enabled through partnership with Congress on the Bipartisan Safer Communities Act—helping accelerate our nation towards the President's ambitious goal of doubling the number of mental health professionals in our nation's schools. Our budget also

includes a new \$25 million investment in the Fund for the Improvement of Postsecondary Education (FIPSE) to help colleges and universities develop campus-wide strategies and improve institutional and systemwide capacity to address student mental health needs and other non-academic barriers to student success, including hiring additional providers on their campuses.

CREATING PATHWAYS FOR GLOBAL ENGAGEMENT

I strongly believe that being bilingual is a superpower. It is why we are requesting \$940 million for English Language Acquisition grants, an increase of \$50 million over FY 2023 and FY 2024 enacted. This increase would not only strengthen capacity for schools to meet the needs of English Learners and their teachers, it would also provide \$75 million to build multilingual teacher pipelines and provide professional development in multilingual education and \$5 million for postsecondary education fellowships to include the quality of multilingual teacher preparation and preparation in other critical educator shortage areas.

To further prepare our students for global success, our high schools should evolve to meet the career and college demands of today and tomorrow. Reimagining traditional educational pathways is a critical piece of the President's vision to increase successful outcomes for all students and help them compete internationally. Accordingly, our budget request includes \$1.5 billion for Career and Technical Education (CTE) state grants, an increase of \$40 million above FY 2023 enacted and \$30 million above FY 2024 enacted, to invest in workforce development and build the capacity of existing CTE programs. We are also requesting \$64.4 million for CTE National Programs (an increase of \$32 million over FY 2023 enacted and \$52 million over FY 2024 enacted), which includes a \$57 million investment in the Career Connected High Schools program to redesign our high schools to build career and college pathways and align with our postsecondary education system. This program will provide competitive grants to partnerships among school districts, institutions of higher education (including community colleges), and employers. Key activities would include dual enrollment,

work-based learning, career-related credentials, career-navigation support, and educator development to support effective integration of academic and career-connected instruction across grades 11–14. Further, our request includes \$12 billion in mandatory funding over 10 years for the new Reducing the Costs of College Fund—and this proposal includes over \$7 billion in the Classroom to Career program, which reduces costs for students by providing funds to States to expand student access to free, career-connected dual enrollment programs.

MAKING POSTSECONDARY EDUCATION INCLUSIVE AND AFFORDABLE

Most well-paying jobs today require some education beyond high school. But as college costs continue to rise, too many students and families are finding it harder to afford that path. And despite all the progress we have made, we still face serious gaps in college completion and attainment based on race and income. Our budget request invests in postsecondary success for all students, improving college affordability, retention, and completion.

To expand equitable and affordable access to an education beyond high school, the Budget proposes to increase the maximum Pell Grant by \$100 for the 2025-2026 award year building on successful efforts to raise the discretionary maximum award by \$900 since the beginning of the Biden-Harris Administration. The Budget also increases the mandatory Pell add-on by \$650 for a total maximum award of \$8,145 for students attending public and non-profit institutions. This increase keeps the Administration on its path to double the maximum Pell Grant at such institutions by 2029. The Administration continues to support expanding all federal student aid to students who are Dreamers—and we are committed to working with Congress to advance this goal.

The Budget also proposes to create partnerships between the federal government and States to make two years of community college free for first-time students and workers wanting to reskill. The Budget proposes mandatory funding for two years of subsidized tuition up to \$4,500 per year for students from families earning less than \$125,000 enrolled in an eligible

four-year Historically Black College or University (HBCU), Tribally Controlled College or University (TCCU), or Minority Serving Institution (MSI).

In addition to the aforementioned Classroom to Career program, the Reducing the Costs of College Fund proposal includes \$5 billion for awards to colleges and universities that:

1) provide an excellent education at an affordable price to expand the number of students served and to share best practices, and 2) scale evidence-based strategies that increase college completion rates, reduce cost burdens for students, and lower costs per graduate.

The Budget also builds on President Biden's historic actions to reduce student debt and college costs by eliminating origination fees charged to borrowers on every new federal student loan.

In addition to improving college affordability, it is critical to help students obtain the resources they need to persist in and complete a postsecondary education. The Budget supports innovative and promising strategies to improve student success and degree completion, including:

- Enhancing institutional capacity at HBCUs, TCCUs, MSIs, and low-resourced institutions, including at community colleges, by requesting \$1.3 billion in institutional support under Titles III and V of the Higher Education Act. Additionally, the Request includes a \$100 million initiative in the FIPSE program to expand research and development infrastructure at four-year HBCUs, TCCUs, and MSIs.
- \$100 million for the Postsecondary Student Success Grant Program, which provides competitive grants to States, nonprofits, institutions of higher education (IHEs), and systems of IHEs to implement, expand, and evaluate evidence-based, data driven completion and success strategies to improve student outcomes.

- \$80 million to colleges and universities providing affordable childcare for low-income student parents, a \$5 million increase over FY 2023 and FY 2024 enacted levels to the Child Care Access Means Parents in School Program, or CCAMPIS.
- Increased funding for Federal TRIO programs and GEAR UP, \$20 million and \$10 million, respectively, above FY 2023 and FY 2024 enacted levels to expand services that promote access and completion in postsecondary education for underserved individuals.
- \$15 million to support a new Statewide Reform Grants program that awards grants to States and state higher education governing, policy, and coordinating entities to implement statewide improvements and reforms to the entire spectrum of postsecondary education—from access to career outcomes and student success.
- \$10 million to support a new Postsecondary Advancement and Success Technical Assistance Center to improve access to equitable college inclusion, completion, and retention opportunities.
- \$12 million for the Open Textbooks Pilot to create new open textbooks and expand their use, in alignment with the Administration’s goal of lowering the cost of college and eliminating unnecessary junk fees.

The Budget will improve the services we provide students and families to help them pay for college through an essential investment in Student Aid Administration. With limited resources, this Administration has been engaged on multiple fronts to improve the student aid experience, including on actions that are Congressionally directed. Some of these efforts include implementing an entirely new student aid formula, revamping a 40-year-old student aid application system, navigating a successful return to repayment from the pandemic-driven payment pause, and overhauling a broken student loan servicing system. We are requesting \$2.7 billion to administer the Federal student aid programs in FY 2025, an increase of \$625 million

and \$600 million, respectively, over FY 2023 and FY 2024 enacted, to support students and student loan borrowers as they navigate these modernized financial aid application and student loan repayment processes. The increase will allow the Office of Federal Student Aid (FSA) to effectively operate the student aid programs, and additionally protect against cybersecurity breaches to ensure protection of borrowers' personal information, implement critical improvements to student loan servicing, continue to modernize its digital infrastructure, and ensure successful administration of the financial aid programs through a simplified application process for students and borrowers.

EDUCATION RESEARCH, ASSESSMENT, AND STATISTICS

Education research and data are important because high-quality information about effective practices and trends in student achievement can help improve teaching and learning, student outcomes, and the return on the public investment in education at the Federal, State, and local levels. Our Budget requests \$816 million for the Institute of Education Sciences, an \$8 million increase above the FY 2023 enacted level and \$22 million above the FY 2024 enacted level, to conduct, provide and share research and scientific evidence in education.

ENFORCEMENT OF CIVIL RIGHTS LAWS

Finally, we prioritize efforts to enforce the Nation's civil rights laws, as they relate to education, by providing \$162 for the Office for Civil Rights, a \$22 million increase above FY 2023 and FY 2024 enacted. The increase would be primarily used to expand staffing capacity to address a complaint workload that has tripled since 2009 and has included alarming reports of rising Antisemitism and anti-Arab discrimination in our Nation's schools and college campuses.

CLOSING REMARKS

I want to thank the Committee for inviting me to discuss the President's FY 2025 Budget for the Department of Education. I have often said that a budget is a statement of values. As you review and consider our budget request, I hope you see how committed President Biden and I are

to boldly raising the bar in education—to transform our education system to better serve the needs of all students. Our Budget is dedicated to achieving that goal. Our children and our country deserve it. Thank you, and I will do my best to respond to any questions you may have.