

Opening Remarks of the Honorable Denny Rehberg, Chairman  
Subcommittee on Labor, HHS, Education and Related Agencies Appropriations  
Department of Education FY13 Budget Hearing  
March 22, 2012

Good Morning Mr. Secretary, Welcome back to the Subcommittee.

This morning we have an opportunity to talk about what I think is one of the most important investments we can make in our country – the education of our young people.

I am proud to say that last year, even under very difficult budget circumstances, we were able to maintain the maximum Pell grant at \$5,550, while making common sense reforms that put the program on a solid fiscal footing this year. We were also able to increase IDEA Grants to States by a modest amount -- \$100 million – it isn't as much as the \$1.2 billion increase I had proposed in the bill I introduced last Fall, but I know that every penny makes a difference to struggling local school districts. And finally, title I grants to states were increased by \$60 million.

Although the overall funding level at the Department of Education actually represented a cut from the prior year, we made the tough decisions to prioritize these core, large formula programs that benefit almost every district in the country.

So I was very disappointed when I saw that, with the nearly \$2 billion in new money allocated for education resources in the President's budget this year, you didn't put the funds into IDEA to help meet our federal commitment there. You didn't put them into title I. You didn't put them into Impact Aid basic support payments, or rural education programs, or TRIO. Not one penny. Instead, your budget requests \$1 billion for a new, never-authorized "Race to the Top" program which would be operated at the college level. The budget request does not provide any authorizing language to carry it out, or any details about how this program would work. Your request also includes a \$300 million increase for the K-12 Race to the Top program, which members of this Subcommittee, as well as members of

the authorizing committees, have serious reservations about. I think you should have gotten that message loud and clear last year.

I notice a pattern here. Many other aspects of your budget request also echo the theme of less money for tried-and-true, formula grant programs to states and more money in flexible pots for brand new ideas left entirely to *your* discretion – and yours alone, without Congressional input -- to distribute.

Why are these large grant programs all level funded in your budget, while new and untested ideas like Race to the Top and the so-called First in the World competition get huge increases? This is a question we need to address.

Sometimes it is necessary to level fund a program in tough budget times. I understand that. But I do not understand why instead of investing the nearly \$2 billion in additional education resources you had to help meet our federal commitment to IDEA, you chose to create brand new programs out of whole cloth that you must know are not going to be well received by any Congressional Committee.

I will ask some questions along these lines in a moment, but at this time I would like to yield to my Ranking Member, Rosa DeLauro, for an opening statement.