



COMMITTEE ON
EDUCATION & LABOR
REPUBLICANS

COMMITTEE
STATEMENT

**Opening Statement of Rep. Virginia Foxx (R-NC)
Republican Leader, Committee on Education and Labor
Markup of H.R. 865, the *Rebuild America's Schools Act*
Tuesday, February 26, 2019**

Promises are a funny thing. Promises have the unique power to inspire hope – immense hope – in millions of people dreaming of something better than the status quo. The federal government's history tells a story of big promises. But making promises is easy. Making good on those promises is the hard part, and nobody in this room should be willing to make a promise that won't be kept.

Philosophically, I believe the federal government shouldn't be involved in education. But I'm also a pragmatist. I know the federal government's involvement will go on, even as we on this side continue the fight to return more control to states and communities where it belongs.

As a pragmatist, I think our first obligation is to do no harm. Two weeks ago, we had a hearing on education spending. Democrat after Democrat bemoaned what they called the chronic underfunding of existing federal programs, particularly IDEA and Title I. Now, Democrats are promoting the *Rebuild America's Schools Act* – legislation that promises a massive overhaul of public school facilities to the tune of \$70 billion – with absolutely nothing to offset the sky-high price tag. Every dollar spent in this bill is a dollar that will not go towards addressing the other pressing needs of our students and teachers. Literally decades of evidence tells us all we're doing here today is piling another broken promise on top of the existing ones.

But what about this bill's own merits? Sadly, Democrats are following a familiar playbook. They've offered up a solution focused more on compliance than assistance. Like so many Democrat proposals before, this program will deliver increased costs and bureaucracy to the many in exchange for little grants to a few school districts.

There are indisputable challenges facing America's public schools, but teachers and students deserve more than the same tired fights over money. Instead of making yet another promise that will go unfulfilled, members of this committee should be working across the aisle on new and innovative approaches to spur success.

Communities are eager to serve their children and students, and when I had the privilege of serving on my community's local school board, I saw firsthand that the most thoughtful and effective solutions to local challenges originate from the local level. Instead of encasing K-12 education in more layers of bureaucracy, we should engage

in community development initiatives to help us solve the problems of low teacher pay and poor school facilities.

One of the biggest mistakes Washington makes is believing we know how to solve all of the problems. Instead of dictating mounds of bureaucracy for old ideas, we should look for better ways to solve the problems we all acknowledge. Schools are integral parts of communities that have a chance to thrive. That's why we need to give innovative ideas, like opportunity zones, the chance to work. Opportunity zones, which were created in the *Tax Cuts and Jobs Act* passed by Republicans last Congress, have the potential of unleashing trillions of dollars in economically depressed communities across the country through long-term private investments designed to kick start economic opportunity.

Instead of threatening taxpayers with a brand new \$70 billion obligation, we should refocus our efforts on these kinds of initiatives to foster public school success and directly benefit millions of American children living in areas of the country that may feel left behind.

H.R. 865 is the wrong answer for our country's schools, students and educators. The American people cannot afford yet another broken promise from politicians in Washington. Let's make good on our previous pledges, and refocus our efforts on fueling innovation that can rebuild our communities far more effectively than the federal government ever could.

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