



COMMITTEE ON
EDUCATION & LABOR
REPUBLICANS

COMMITTEE
STATEMENT

**Opening Statement of Rep. Virginia Foxx (R-NC), Republican Leader
Committee on Education and Labor Hearing:
“Examining the Education Department’s Implementation of Borrower Defense”
December 12, 2019**

(As prepared for delivery)

“Thank you, Secretary DeVos, for being here today. It is my hope that today’s hearing will provide Members of the Committee with a chance to understand how the Department of Education is working to address borrowers’ defense claims that have been filed with the Department.

Mr. Chairman, I’d like to make one thing clear, above all else, Committee Republicans support smart, focused, and constructive oversight. Members of Congress have an important responsibility to protect every single tax dollar. Everyone in this room knows how serious we take that responsibility.

Strong and effective oversight can strengthen the integrity of our institutions, including the Department of Education. Ensuring the federal government is efficient and accountable should be a top priority for all Members of Congress.

Sadly, this Committee is missing an opportunity to address serious oversight issues. We could investigate the widespread and brazen lawbreaking by the United Auto Worker (UAW) union leaders who betrayed hardworking Americans in favor of self-enrichment. We know the UAW’s senior union leaders engaged in money laundering, tax fraud, bribery, and embezzlement, but this Committee has taken no action. We could investigate the potential fraud within Head Start. A recent report from the nonpartisan Government Accountability Office (GAO) indicated there was income fabrication and doctored applications to impact an individual’s eligibility. We could investigate how potentially tens of thousands of people may be committing student loan fraud, as a GAO report found borrowers

may have understated their income or overstated their family size to reduce their student loan payments.

There are real opportunities to work together to address these serious issues that require honest oversight.

Instead, Committee Democrats will choose to use their time today attacking Secretary DeVos for delays in responses to oversight requests she is responding to.

Let me remind everyone here today that the process to produce the oversight documents requested by any Member of Congress, including the Committee Chairman, requires reviews across multiple offices within the agency. All of this takes time and is necessary to produce documents and answers that are actually responsive to Members.

Despite the limitations of the bureaucracy, the Education Department is trying to work with the Committee Democrats to respond to all their requests.

So, contrary to the claims I expect to hear today from my colleagues across the aisle, Secretary DeVos and the Education Department are committed to providing relief to students who have been harmed by fraudulent practices and are reforming the borrower defense to repayment rule to both clarify standards and make the process more accessible.

Since taking office, Secretary DeVos has spent more than two years on deliberations, public hearings, negotiations with higher education stakeholders, and considering, incorporating, and responding to public comments on this issue. They did so with a regulatory reset in mind to hold colleges and universities accountable and provide relief to students who have been harmed by deceptive practices.

Claims that Secretary DeVos is unnecessarily or purposely delaying relief for these borrowers is false.

Secretary DeVos is putting reforms in place that will help defrauded students navigate the process of getting the loan relief they deserve. And Committee

Republicans are supportive of these efforts. Defrauded students who have been financially harmed should get relief.

I thank Secretary DeVos again for being here today, and I look forward to our discussion about how the Education Department is working to protect student borrowers and American taxpayers by not only holding fraudulent institutions accountable but also working to prevent fraud from happening in the first place.”

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