



COMMITTEE ON
EDUCATION & LABOR
REPUBLICANS

COMMITTEE
STATEMENT

**Opening Statement of Rep. Virginia Foxx (R-NC), Republican Leader
Committee on Education and Labor Hearing:
“Growing Up in Fear: How the Trump Administration’s Immigration Policies Are
Harming Children”
December 4, 2019**

(As prepared for delivery)

“Mr. Chairman, I am disappointed by the lack of notice that staff received in order to prepare for this hearing. While the staff of the majority met the requirements under the rules of this Committee, the notice certainly did not meet the standard you set at the beginning of this Congress to be a model Committee. If the majority were interested in having a serious conversation about this issue, it would have given Committee Republicans more than one day’s notice heading into a holiday week.

I am also concerned by the partisan pre-conceptions surrounding the hearing title. The implication that the Trump administration is intentionally harming children is disgusting.

The sad truth is that children are often used as pawns by smugglers and other nefarious networks to gain entry to the U.S. That is why House Republicans have introduced legislation that would protect children by addressing the factors that fuel illegal immigration and fraud at the border.

Before we hear from our witnesses about the impact immigration policies may have on children’s development, I’d like to set a couple facts straight.

First, school-aged children, regardless of their or their parents’ immigration status, have access to free education and several federal programs, which include health and nutrition benefits. Second, children coming to the U.S. illegally, who

are separated from their parents, are provided medical care, mental health care, and education services.

Other services available to children regardless of their or their parents' immigration status are provided through Head Start and Early Head Start programs, which aim to help with children's growth in areas such as language, literacy, and social and emotional development.

Most notably, states and school districts are obligated under *Plyler v. Doe* to provide all children regardless of their immigration status access to public education at the elementary and secondary level. Federal elementary and secondary education programs also serve students who are illegal immigrants.

This idea that this Administration's actions are denying children access to education and child nutrition programs is false.

That said, we know that all children – including those U.S. born with immigrant parents or children who are immigrants themselves – may face trauma. As we learned during a Subcommittee on Civil Rights and Human Services hearing in September, the statistics are heart breaking. Studies show that 26 percent of children in the United States will witness or experience a traumatic event before they turn four, and more than two thirds of children reported at least one traumatic event by age 16.

These traumatic events can significantly affect a child's education and impair their ability to learn.

That is why Congress must address the root causes of the immigration crisis, not its symptoms. Unfortunately, House Democrats are so obsessed with impeaching President Trump and trying to undermine the Trump administration that we have been unable to get to work on bipartisan solutions.

And once again, instead of working on bipartisan solutions, the Democrats are using this hearing to cherry-pick stories to advance a partisan narrative.

I look forward to the testimony of Mark Metcalf, who has worked on these issues as an attorney and immigration judge. Mr. Metcalf is proposing solutions that should have bipartisan support that would address the trauma and fear

immigrant children face. Many of these solutions have also been proposed by the Trump administration and Republicans in Congress.

I want to thank our witnesses for being here today and I look forward to hearing your testimony.”

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