

**EDUCATION & LABOR COMMITTEE**

**Congressman George Miller, Chairman**

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Press Office, 202-226-0853

**Chairman Miller Statement at Committee Hearing On “NCLB:  
Preventing Dropouts and Enhancing School Safety”**

WASHINGTON, D.C. – *Below are the prepared remarks of U.S. Rep. George Miller (D-CA), chairman of the House Education and Labor Committee, for a committee hearing on “NCLB: Preventing Dropouts and Enhancing School Safety.”*

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Welcome to this afternoon’s hearing on improving student graduation rates and enhancing school safety.

These two issues are critically important to students, parents, educators, and communities across the country, and we plan to address them during the Elementary and Secondary Act reauthorization.

Nationally, only about 70 percent of students graduate from high school with a regular high school diploma. In fact, each year, schools lose approximately 1.2 million students who drop out for a wide range of reasons.

This means that nearly one-third of our students are missing the opportunities provided by a high school diploma. This is a serious problem that demands our attention and hard work.

It hurts more than these students – it also harms our economy and economic competitiveness.

While we have to do more to ensure that all children graduate from high school, the dropout rate is far worse for poor and minority students and students with disabilities.

Only about half of all African American and Hispanic students graduate from high school on time with a regular diploma.

High school students living in low-income families drop out of school at six times the rate of students from high-income families. And students with disabilities are twice as likely to drop out as those who do not have disabilities.

We know that earning a high school diploma is a critical prerequisite to joining the middle class.

High school dropouts earn over a quarter of a million dollars less over their lifetime than those who hold a high school diploma. The disparity widens to a million dollars when dropouts’ incomes are compared with college graduates’ income.

We are far from solving the dropout crisis in America.

As a part of our ongoing process to reauthorize the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, this committee is reviewing elements of successful dropout prevention programs, many of which you will hear about today.

Beyond just socioeconomic factors, experts have identified early indicators that help predict whether a student is likely to drop out of high school.

Research in four school districts shows that we can identify over half of future dropouts as early as the sixth grade by looking at a small number of telling indicators – attendance, discipline, and trouble mastering basic reading and math skills.

Programs across the country that have successfully identified and prevented high school dropouts have common elements.

Among other things, they focus on meeting both academic and non-academic needs of students in a caring, non-threatening environment.

One key element of student success is ensuring that schools are safe and free from drugs. No Child Left Behind contains several provisions that attempt to encourage safe learning environments for students and teachers.

Research shows that if students do not feel safe, they are more likely to have academic problems and are also more likely to drop out.

I want to thank Congresswoman McCarthy for her leadership on school safety issues.

Today's witnesses will help us approach the NCLB reauthorization with a strong focus on how to promote engaging, safe learning environments that help students most at risk for dropping out. We thank you for appearing before the Committee today and look forward to your testimony.

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