

PSC-ED-OUS

**Moderator: Emmanuel Caudillo
February 25, 2015
12:00 pm CT**

Coordinator: Welcome and thank you for standing by.

At this point, all participants are in a listen-only mode until the question-and-answer session of today's conference call. At that point, if you'd like to ask questions, you may press Star and then 1.

Today's call is being recorded. If you have any objections, you may disconnect at this point.

Now I will turn the meeting over to your host, Mr. Marco Davis.

Sir, you may begin.

Marco Davis: Thank you very much.

Welcome, everyone. As the operator just said, my name is Marco Davis. I'm the Deputy Director of the White House Initiative on Educational Excellence for Hispanics. I'm joined by several colleagues here at the Initiative. I want to thank you all for joining us today for our Webinar.

Two quick business matters. I want to remind you that also as the operator just said, this call, including the Q&A, will be recorded. And the recording and the transcript, along with the slide presentation will be posted to the Initiative's Web site after the call to make the information available for anyone who wasn't able to join us during the live Webinar.

I also want to inform and remind you that this Webinar is off the record and not intended for press purposes.

The agenda will go as follows: I'm going to describe today's topic very, very briefly and then introduce our speaker who's going to run through some slides and present for about 15 to 20 minutes. And then we'll have the remainder of the hour open for Q&A.

When we get to the Q&A section, the operator will come back on and provide guidance for you all on how to get into the queue to ask questions.

And now onto our discussion today on P-12 education, civil rights, and equity with John B. King.

In his recent weekly address, the President said, "In today's world, we have to equip all our kids with an education that prepares them for success, regardless of what they look like, or how much their parents make, or the zip code they live in."

John King recently joined the US Department of Education as Senior Advisor Delegated Duties of Deputy Secretary of Education. And in today's Webinar, he will talk about the need to overhaul the Elementary and Secondary Education Act -- also known as No Child Left Behind -- with a law that not

only ensures students are prepared for college, careers and life, but also delivers on the promise of equity and real opportunity for every child.

So without further ado, let me turn it over to our speaker, Mr. John King.

John?

John King: Thanks so much.

And thank you all for joining us for the call. I'm looking forward to today's discussion.

We can start with the first slide.

One after that.

There we go.

So the President in his recent State of the Union emphasized that America's education system is the key to our prosperity and ultimately our democracy. He pointed out that America thrived in the 20th Century because we made high school free and the generation of GI to college and the training the best workforce in the world. But in the 21st Century economy that rewards knowledge like never before, we need to do more.

And we really are, as the President indicated, at a crossroad in education in United States. We made tremendous progress in recent years. But we clearly have a long way to go.

In the next slide, we illustrate some of those indicators of progress. The national high school graduation rate is at an all-time high at 81%. Since the 2000 achievement gaps for African-American and Latino, 4th graders have now about 30% to 40%. The number of Black and Latino students taking a P exam has increased nearly five-fold. And college enrollment for Black and Hispanic students is up by more than 1 million since 2008.

So those are all important indicators of progress. And yet at the same time, we know that we have a long way to go. The US unfortunately ranks now 25th in the world in access to pre-school education. And the recent study illustrated a huge gap that we face in access to higher education, and showed that more than half of the young people under the age of 25 in the top quartile of income have bachelor's degrees as opposed to just one in ten for young people from our lowest-income family.

So there is much work to do even with all the progress that has been made over the last six years.

A key part of how we will make progress, we think, is reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act.

If we can turn to the next slide, as a bit of context, it's important to remember that the Elementary and Secondary Education Act was adopted in 1965 as part of a series of major legislative achievements for the civil rights movement. President Johnson believed that full educational opportunity should be our first national goal.

And so we have to think about the reauthorization in the context of that civil rights tradition. The Elementary and Secondary Education Act was intended to ensure equity of opportunity, particularly for low-income students. That's

the important role played by the Title I Program. And it was supposed to be a step towards a more equal country.

In the next slide, we point out that the current version of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, known as No Child Left Behind, was adopted in a bipartisan effort on 2001 to try to ensure continued progress towards the goal of equal educational opportunity and to provide additional support for schools, and to ensure accountability for student progress.

But I think everyone would agree -- certainly there's strong bipartisan agreement -- that it's time to move beyond No Child Left Behind, that despite some of the progress that we see from No Child Left Behind, there are significant weaknesses in the current version of the law. And it needs to be replaced.

The question - and the reason why we're at a crossroad as a country, the question is replace with what? What will the next iteration of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act look like? And will it be a step forward or will it take us back? We believe there's an opportunity to move forward with a new law that prioritizes the quality of opportunity for all kids, that expands support for schools, for teachers, for principals, ensures continued accountability for the progress of all students, invests in early learning and in innovation.

And so our conversation today is really to share with you some of the Administration's priorities around reauthorization and get your feedback and input on those priorities.

Turning to the next slide, one of the important elements of NCLB that we think needs to be protected is the notion that all schools need to be

accountable for the performance of all students. Important step forward with NCLB was the desegregation of student outcome so that schools would need to report how their African-American students are doing, how their Hispanic students are doing, how low-income students are doing. That is an important element of the civil rights legacy of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act.

However, the law had significant limitations. For example, it focused entirely on the percentage of students who are proficient in a given school rather than on the growth that students were making. For that reason, in 2011 the Administration began a process of offering flexibility around key aspects of No Child Left Behind in the form of waivers which allowed the states to adopt plans that were reviewed by the Department, that committed them to close achievement gaps, increase equity, to improve instruction and outcomes for all students. And now we have 42 states, the District of Columbia and Puerto Rico all operating under that flexibility.

Moving onto the next slide, as we look towards what a new law should look like, we think it's important to continue the progress towards greater equity. Early in January, Secretary Duncan laid out the Administration's priorities for the reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act.

In a speech that he gave in elementary school in District of Columbia, Secretary Duncan talked about the importance of protecting the notion of annual statewide assessment so that we have good information for parents and teachers about the progress that students are making.

Secretary Duncan talked about the importance of investment in our - particularly our highest-need schools, so that teachers and principals have the resources they need.

The Secretary talked about the importance of making early learning a part of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act. We all know learning doesn't begin at age 5 when students arrive in kindergarten. So it's much earlier than that. And we need to ensure good high quality early learning opportunities for all of our students.

The Secretary talked about the importance of federal investment in innovation, the federal government fostering innovative efforts to get better and how we serve the full range of our students.

The Secretary talked about modernizing the teaching profession, ensuring that we have the best preparation for our teachers and principals to serve all students, that we then provide good professional development and support to teachers and principals throughout their careers and good opportunities for our most effective teachers and principals to advance as leaders amongst their colleagues.

As we go through the next slide, we really see this moment as having incredible moral significance. This is a moment where we need to decide, will we preserve the civil rights legacy of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act and we would continue the progress that has been made.

Turning to the next slide, in particular, we worry that some of the proposals currently being discussed in Congress would actually be a step backwards. They would eliminate accountability for states to act when schools are struggling. Those proposals would actually move resources from our highest-needs schools to more affluent schools.

Some of those proposals would actually significantly reduce the funding available in those districts that serve the largest numbers of Hispanic students. So we worry significantly about the current direction. We point out in this slide that the proposal being discussed this week by House Republicans like the - 1128 that'd be acted on this week would resolve in \$1.9 billion less in federal funding than the President's Budget.

Turning to the next slide, the President in the 2016 budget really tried to reflect now same priorities that we are bringing to the discussion of Elementary and Secondary Education Act. President proposed an additional \$1 billion for Title I to reach our highest-needs schools, significant increase in P-12 funding overall. The President focused on an initiative to expand pre-school to get towards universal access to pre-K. President offered a proposal around investing in teacher and principal preparation and professional development. And as many of you probably know, the President also offered a proposal that would guarantee universal access to community college for students who are working hard and getting good grades.

The President also proposed a number of other specific investments.

Turning to the next slide.

One of those investments is to put more resources towards the IDA to provide additional dollars to address the needs of our students with disability. Another was additional funding focused on English learners. Another was to nearly triple the funding for the Promised Neighborhoods Initiative, which tries to bring communities together, schools, community-based organizations, local government, to meet the needs of kids and families.

The President also proposed additional funding for civil rights enforcement so that our Office of Civil Rights can continue to ensure equity of opportunity for all students.

I mentioned in the next slide the significant proposed investment to the President's Budget in the early learning, including \$75 billion over ten years for the Pre-School for All Initiative, an additional \$500-million increase for the pre-school development grants program which helps states to grow their pre-school offering, and to ensure not just greater access to pre-school but better quality pre-school.

The President also proposed a significant increase in funding for our pre-school programs serving students with disability.

In the next slide, I mentioned that the budget included an emphasis on supporting our teachers and principals, \$5 billion over five years for the Teaching for Tomorrow Initiative, \$350 million for the Excellent Educator grants which are designed to reward our most successful teachers and principals and give them leadership opportunities in their schools and district, significant new funding to improve teacher and principal preparation which we think is critical to ensuring that teachers are ready to serve 21st Century classrooms, as well as possible, all teachers need to be prepared to work effectively with English learners. All teachers need to be prepared to work effectively with students with disability. All teachers need to have the - both the content knowledge and the teaching skills necessary to prepare their kids for college and career success.

The President also proposed a significant increase in funding directed towards better use of technology in schools. We know that's a key part of the future of our nation's economy. We've got to ensure the kids are getting the

opportunities in school that will prepare them for a high-tech 21st Century economy.

And the next slide, along with the P-12 investments I've described, the President proposed very significant additional investments directed towards higher education, building on the very significant increases, for example, in Pell Grant for low-income students that we've seen over the last six years, creating through the America's College Promise Initiative a guarantee around access to free community college for students who are working hard and doing well, an effort to simplify the FAFSA, the financial aid application process, as well as funding targeted towards career and technical education so that, you know, people have access to the high-tech, high-skilled jobs that are available and unfilled today.

Finally, the budget emphasized the importance of investing in innovation. So if we turn to that last slide, Investing in What Works, the President proposed significant funding for what we call our i3 Program, Investing in Innovation, where we provide funding to initiatives that can demonstrate that they are building on the evidence about what works for students, programs that have thoughtful evaluation so that we can learn from those investments, and a plan when something is identified as very effective, particularly for high-risk students, a plan for how we disseminate and scale those initiatives.

The President also proposed a significant funding for the First in the World effort, which is designed to foster innovation in higher education so that our higher-ed institutions can get better at helping students who arrive behind academically catch up, get through remedial courses and into credit-bearing courses. That program is intended to support universities that identify new ways to attract diverse students to stem-field, for example, new strategies to

help ensure that the students who start as freshmen actually complete and graduate.

And then there were additional funds in the President's Budget for other formula-based and competitive grant programs, again, with a very heavy emphasis on strengthening equity of opportunity through our investment in education.

So both our ESEA proposals and the President's Budget really are targeted towards the notion that we have to invest more in our kids, that we have to invest in ways that are smart, that builds on evidence, that start with our early learners and support our students all the way through into higher education and preparation for careers.

As I mentioned at the outset, we really think this is a crossroad's moment. The civil rights community has been a strong partner over the last couple of months in making the case both around these investments and the importance of protecting the civil rights components of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act. Clear lines of accountability for schools, districts and states to serve all of their students well, not just some of their students well.

And we're going to keep making that case. The National Governors Association, The National Organization of State Legislators, The Chief States School Officers all have talked about the important federal role in the educational improvement and have been supported of key aspects of our agenda around reauthorization and our budget (priorities). The challenge now is to get Congress to work with us in a bipartisan fashion to move this agenda forward for the sake of all students.

So with that, let me stop there and invite your questions and comments.

Marco Davis: Thank you very much, John.

And so, operator, if you can come on and remind folks again how it is they can get into the queue to ask a question.

Coordinator: No problem, sir.

We'll now begin the question-and-answer session of today's conference call.

If you'd like to ask any questions, you may press Star and then 1. And then record your name for the question.

Once again, that's Star and then 1. So you can record your name for any questions.

To cancel your request, that would be Star and 2.

One moment please, speakers, for any questions.

Marco Davis: Great. And while we're waiting for folks to get into the queue, one thing if I may sort of start off the conversation, John, just also by way of background that might be useful for our stakeholders, I know and those of us here at Ed do know that you've got some history, some background working with underserved communities working with low-income communities, working with Latino communities in particular. So I just wonder if you might share a little bit about your perspective, your thoughts, your experience. I know you have close ties to the community. And so that might be helpful...

John King: Sure.

Marco Davis: ...for folks...

John King: Sure.

Marco Davis: ...who are not familiar with you. (Unintelligible).

John King: Sure. Thanks. Well, you know, I'm a near-city kid. I grew up in Brooklyn. And it was teachers that I had at PS 276 in Canarsie and the reason that I - in doing what I do today. Those teachers made a huge difference in my life during difficult period of my life when folks could have looked and seen African-American-Latino male student from a family in crisis where I lost both my parents.

And they could have written me off. But they didn't. They invested in me. And that's why I believe so strongly in the difference that schools can make and the importance of the work that we're trying to do every day at the Department.

And then as a teacher in Puerto Rico and then in Boston, and as a principal in Boston and then running a network of schools in New York City, I try to focus my energies on helping high-need students, particularly African, American, Latino students, low-income students have access to opportunity.

And then that took me to New York State Education Department where I was the commissioner in New York State and had a pleasure of working with folks here at the Department to advance these initiatives. And now I'm - it's an honor and a privilege to be able to work with Secretary Duncan and the President and this Administration to try to advance better outcome for all our kids.

Marco Davis: Great. Thank you so much for sharing that, I think, very powerful story.

And by the way, for those of you who didn't notice or who are curious, with the Webinar invite, we sent out a link to John's biography which is posted on the US Department of Education Web site.

So you also can go there and sort of see that when he was announced in this new position, his biography was posted so you can get more info if you're interested in learning more again about how this distinguished leader came to be here in this - we think this really important position here at the Department of Ed for the sake of not just Latino students but really all students.

So with that, operator, do we have folks in the queue ready to ask questions?

Coordinator: Yes, sir. We currently have some quarters on the queue.

Marco Davis: Great.

Coordinator: Our first question comes from the line of Ms. (Calderon).

Ma'am, you have an open line.

(Wenna Calderon): Great. Thank you.

This is (Wenna Calderon). I'm with the National Council of La Raza. And so thank you very much for hosting this Webinar.

I did have a question on English language learners. There have been several attempts to go back accountability for English language learners or to codify

language in the ESEA flexibility now or, I'm sorry, in ESEA waivers. What's sort of your vision for a stronger accountability system for English language learners given their individual needs and also sort of the additional resources and supports they need to be able to reach proficiency and meet those goals?

John King: I really appreciate the question. Thanks.

So one of the things that we are advocating for very strongly is to try to preserve the important protections in No Child Left Behind for English learners, the notion that we need to desegregate performance of our English learners so that we can hold schools, districts, states accountable for the progress of our English learners.

We also think it's important that in all of the elements of a new ESEA, whether it's early learning or teacher and principals supports in professional development and preparation, we've got to make English language learners central focus. That's a place where we can't allow the discussion to leave behind an important set of students.

We do think that there is an opportunity for a more nuance look at accountability, particularly the focus on progress that students are making. Certainly when students arrive in middle school or high school academically behind, we've got to look at how much growth are they making over time when we think about accountability. Certainly when students are recently arrived to United States, may not have the English fluency yet, we've got to make sure that we're mindful of how much progress they're making.

So we think there's an opportunity in accountability to look not just at students proficiency but also their growth, as well as their - taking into account their English language proficiency as a way of thinking about their

performance in English and Math, content standards. We also think we need to take into consideration the time that students have been here as we think about accountability.

So we're working from more nuance picture of accountability. We also think it's important to look at students who have exited from English learner services, how are they doing, so that schools and districts are accountable to continue support for students once they exit those services.

We also think we need to look at long-term ELS, the students who have been in English learner services for a long period of time and haven't made progress. We've got to focus schools and districts on helping those students, and also SIFE students, the students with interrupted formal education. We think it's important for states and districts to look particularly at the supports they're providing to their SIFE students.

Marco Davis: Great. Thank you. Do we have another question?

Operator, do we have someone else in queue?

Coordinator: Yes, sir. Our next question comes from the line of Ms. Collins.

Ma'am, you have an open line.

Ariel Collins: Hi. This is Ariel Collins. And I'm from the City Project. We're a public policy and legal advocacy group in Los Angeles. And one of our focus areas is quality education including physical education for public school children.

A recent audit of California schools shows that half of the public school districts in California do not comply with physical education laws, and that

Black and Hispanic students were more likely to come from schools where there was lower levels of compliance. And that also included schools and compliant districts included fewer low-income students.

So knowing the benefits of physical education and knowing that for a lot of children of color and from low-income communities, schools are often the only places where children have to play and get exercise. Was there any discussions of physical education and the fact that the failure to provide physical education raises questions of discrimination under Title VI? Thank you.

John King: Yes. So thanks for the question.

So one of the things that we think is important to reauthorization is a focus on resource equity. Some folks have talked about it as an equity dashboard. But we think we've got to look at accountability beyond just academic performance but other indicators like our students getting access to physical education, our students getting access to art and music, our students getting access to advanced course work, what portion of students by subgroup are getting access to high-quality early learning opportunities.

So one of our hopes for reauthorization that there'll be a commitment to this equity dashboard and then a commitment resources and (authorities) to the Department to act on inequity. So one of the reasons that the President proposed very significant increase in funding for our Office of Civil Rights is to be able to act on complaints of inequity that would be revealed by this equity dashboard. Even just in the last few days, there was a recent announcement about the need for expansion of sports opportunities in a district for female students because of OCR complaint that was made where the district wasn't fulfilling its 1009 responsibilities.

So we're very committed to both greater transparency about these equity issues, but also the notion that the federal government needs to play an enforcement role around these civil rights issues.

Ariel Collins: Thank you.

Marco Davis: Great. Thanks very much. Operator, do we have another question?

Coordinator: Yes, sir. Our next question comes from the line of Ms. (Hutchinson).

Ma'am, you have an open line. Ms. (Hutchinson), your line is now open.

Marco Davis: Hello? It seems like we may have lost Ms. (Hutchinson).

Coordinator: Okay. Our next question comes from the line of Mr. (Daniel Cruz).

Mr. (Cruz), you have an open line.

(Daniel Cruz): Thank you. And thank you for a very informative presentation.

I just wanted to comment. There has been a very notable outreach to the Hispanic community and getting our students to do the FAFSA with Michelle Obama talking on Univision, which is a wide network, television network.

My question is do you know how long will it - would this outreach take or be for this year?

John King: Yes. Well, we are certainly very committed to the outreach efforts around access to college. One of the things that the First Lady did a few weeks ago,

we had a- event here at the Department and then an event at the White House for the Counselor of the Year to try to signal that just as we celebrate the Teacher of the Year, we need to celebrate the Counselor of the Year because that's often the person in schools who's helping students navigate the FAFSA, navigate the college or postsecondary opportunity process.

So that outreach effort is going to continue both at the Department and at the White House. We are also looking at ways that we can simplify the FAFSA process. And potentially we're open to working with Congress on identifying ways to further simplify the FAFSA process. We also think with Americas College Promise Initiative that we have an opportunity to signal very clearly to young people that access to your community college degree is guaranteed and that we can ensure that they have the resources they need to make it through that two-year degree.

So I appreciate the comment. We're very committed to this effort and are continually thinking of ways that we can try to make the process more smooth for applicants.

Marco Davis: And this is Marco Davis. I want to just add to that that the effort that brought the First Lady to do that appearance on (unintelligible) is called the Reach Higher Initiative that she launched a year ago. And she's basically signaled that it'll be one of it, not the primary effort that she'll be carrying out through the remainder of the Administration. So she's pushing the Reach Higher specifically to try to ensure more students both reach and complete postsecondary education.

So things like FAFSA completion are obviously an integral part of that. So I think activities from her office for sure will continue throughout this cycle on

into the fall. Hopefully people prep for the new cycle that begins next year and so on.

And then concurrent with that, I wanted to mention our initiative, the White House Initiative on Educational Excellence for Hispanics, as you can imagine by our name, specifically focused on outreach to the Latino community. And we find that awareness about FAFSA, completion of the FAFSA is a really crucial part. We don't have anywhere near as many people as should be as are eligible for Federal Student Aid completing the FAFSA. And so we have, for example, a guide to Federal Student Aid called (Gradúate) which is available on our Web site, which is at ed.gov/hispanicinitiative.

That guide is actually available in English and Spanish. And basically pretty much every activity, our monthly newsletter, et cetera, every outreach activity we do, we do try to mention to people, things like the (FACT) which we still surprise people to know several years later since it's been done. The FAFSA, for example, can be filled out in Spanish. And people are often are still not aware of that, that if they simply go to studentaid.gov and click in the top right corner where it says, "Español," they can then actually access the FAFSA and fill it out completely in Spanish.

So we're also, on behalf of the Administration, continuing to do that outreach. So it'll be going on for quite a bit.

But if folks want any more info or need any more support or help in ways to help spread the word, please do reach out to us.

(Daniel Cruz): Thank you.

Marco Davis: Great.

So, operator, we'll go onto the next question.

Coordinator: Our next question comes from the line of Ms. (Ingrid Biela). Ma'am, you have an open line.

(Ingrid Biela): Hello?

John King: Hello.

Marco Davis: Hello.

(Ingrid Biela): Oh hi. How are you? My name is (Ingrid Biela). And I am a community outreach assistant for Prince George's County in Maryland. And I actually have a question.

I know you're offering for the English - the learners of another language. We have a high population that we're receiving, at least in my school, that are refugees. Those students - some of the students and some of the minor children who are coming to the United States from Central America, some of those students have limited or none of the English language skills. Has the Department of Education has ever thought about placing the students or creating an institution or school that they can go in and take intensive English classes for four months or six months prior to going into the classrooms?

Because we - all of those students in the - or the minority of those students end up not going to college because they get so frustrated. They don't learn the language. They are supposed to get the skills that are being taught for the grade level. And it's too much for them.

And we really want them to achieve higher education or reach higher education. We need to do something differently than what we've been doing, you know, to make them a part of the initiative that you're having.

John King: And I appreciate the question. I think that's exactly right. You know, there are some strong examples around the country of schools that are focused on newcomer students, I think particularly the international schools network that has had a lot of success with students who are newly arrived, high-school age students who are able to make good progress. Their graduation rates are stronger. Their college matriculation rates are stronger than many schools serving similar populations because they're very focused on supporting their teachers around working effectively with English learners.

One of the reasons we think it's important to invest in teacher and principal preparation is that we need teachers who are bilingual, who are able to provide content instruction. So that even if students are arriving without English language skills, they still have access to math and science and social studies in the native language so that they can continue to make academic progress.

You know, I think one of the challenges is will we be able to persuade Congress of the importance of putting additional resources (unintelligible) success of all students.

(Ingrid Biela): Yes.

John King: Oh, go ahead.

(Ingrid Biela): The reality is that, for example, we have here over 120 students that are in the EASeL program. And we only have two teachers. How in the world can they serve 125 students? You know, the budget is so - I understand that there's no

enough funds to have more teachers assigned for those students. But if you - that's what I'm saying. There are little things that need to take place before, you know - for your initiative or what you're planning to do in order for those students not to be left behind.

John King: Agree completely. And I think, you know, one of the things that I hope everyone on the call can do is to help us make this case to the broader public around why investments are so important. Right? The investment in teachers who are prepared to serve our English learners effectively is critical to the future of the country. You know, our - we've got to make sure the public understands that if we have a set of students who aren't getting the skills that they need, who aren't able to graduate from high school, who aren't able to go on to college or postsecondary career training, that harms all of us. That harms the future of the country. That harms our future prosperity.

And so, you know, one of the things I hope folks will take away from this call is the importance of working together to make sure the public understands that investing in education and particularly for English learners isn't an expense; it's an investment.

Marco Davis: Yes. And this is Marco.

Just the one thing I want to add is - and thank you for your effort and your dedication because clearly, a lot of this work plays out at the local level, at the school level, at the district level and so on. So the work that you're doing there in Prince George's County is absolutely essential.

And to that extent, therefore, there's a few things but not as many things that the federal government can do at the federal level. Nonetheless, we've tried to at least make information about resources and options and certainly about

rights of individuals available. And so also on the Department of Education Web site, ed.gov, if you simply go to the search box and enter “Recent Arrivals,” you’ll find that there’s a page specifically on educational resources for new arrivals and for DACA students. And it walks through some of the information that’s available, again some of the rights that students have, and even resources for schools and school districts that in case they’re not taking full advantage of all that is available that they can plug into. And hopefully that at least points in the right direction of ways in which folks can be trying to support these students more adequately.

(Ingrid Biela): Thank you.

Marco Davis: Thank you. Operator, we’ve got time for a few more questions. Is there someone from the queue?

Coordinator: Yes, sir. Our next question comes from the line of (Olivia Benford).

Ma’am, you have an open line.

(Olivia Benford): Yes. Thank you.

I am in Deep South Texas, 10 miles from the Mexican border. Unemployment rate is highest in the nation. And parental engagement is a major component in achieving student success. I do see that there’s 1 billion for Title I. But Title I has too many parts to it. So is there any plan to invest in this specific area?

John King: Yes. I appreciate the question.

So there’s a parent engagement set aside for Title I that districts can use. But we think one of the things that needs to happen is we need to have schools

working cooperatively with community-based organizations and local government to support families.

And so the Promise Neighborhoods Initiative is getting some good results in places around the country and the President has proposed tripling the funding for Promise Neighborhoods.

In the Promise Neighborhoods model, you've got community-based organizations, health clinics, programs that provide employment training for adults working cooperatively with schools to try to support parents and then you've got local government also trying to coordinate services, so that the community sets some common aspirations for what they want to achieve for students, and then everyone is working together towards common goals rather than having sort of overlapping or competing agendas.

So we see Promise Neighborhoods as a very hopeful initiative that can try to get at exactly what you're describing.

John King: Yes. And it's - go ahead, I'm sorry.

(Olivia Benford): No, I was just going to say our closest Promise Neighborhood is, like, 300 miles away. And so we're pretty remotely located down here, although we've started a community-based coalition here which is going so well lately. We've been able to muster up about 3000 parents that are joining us and 33 community-based organizations that are coming together with our school districts, but we do need the funding because we have a population - student population of 33,000. So 3000 is just, you know, scratching the surface. So we need...

John King: That's exactly right. No, that's exactly right. And one of the biggest risks in this current ESEA discussion is that the proposal that's being discussed in the House this week would actually take money from districts like yours and transfer that money to affluent districts. And so we've really got a work over the next few weeks to make sure that people hear your message, that we can make progress, we have these opportunities to positively engage families and their kids' education, but we need the resources to do it.

(Olivia Benford): Well, we've got everything. The only thing we're missing is the money down here. So thank you very much, though.

Marco Davis: Thank you.

John King: Thank you.

The one thing I would just recommend is do keep an eye on stuff at the Department of Ed that the Department recently released a parent and community engagement framework that sort of articulates the vision around effective family school partnerships, around prioritizing family engagement more in the education space.

And so it's being identified increasingly as a priority for other Department of Education grants such as the Investing in Innovation, also known as i3 grant program. So if there's a new cycle of that that comes around, you might look into that as a possible funding option and those types of things.

So definitely do keep an eye up because the Department does value that concept and wants to see it integrated as much as possible. And so, again, there may be future grant opportunities that will incorporate that around which you could build an application and try to access some funding.

(Olivia Benford): Okay, thank you so much.

John King: Thank you. All right, operator, another question?

Coordinator: Yes, sir. Our last question comes from the line of Mr. (Steve Ramos). Sir, you have an open line.

(Steve Ramos): Thank you very much. I appreciate the opportunity. I just like to start off by saying - I like to thank the Administration for their bold steps in immigration and education. I think it's so important. So thank you for that.

My question comes from I'm a board chair for a charter school in Indianapolis. And we, as a charter, we are - we have restrictions on certain areas and we're not allowed to receive grants in certain areas as well. And so we are kind of - while there's a lot of emphasis in charters because they can provide us better education in certain environments, we're often hampered by where we can't apply for the same kinds of grants that a normal public school can have.

Is there, you know, is there any focus on the Administration to even that opportunity for schools who are really trying - really are making a difference in the urban community?

John King: Yes, thanks. So we try to ensure that our competitive grant programs can be accessed by district schools as well as charter schools. I do think in the ESEA reauthorization there's the opportunity for some bipartisan efforts to continue the investment in the Federal Charter School Program which supports efforts to grow high-quality charters seats. And we will really continue to look for

ways to make sure that charters are able to compete on equitable basis for grants that the Department is running.

One of the concerns about the current bills being considered including the House bill that's, like, to be voted on this weekend draft from Senator Alexander is there's a risk that states will be left with tremendous discretion about whether or not to put resources towards the highest-need students.

And we worry about this provision -- the supportability provision -- that would actually move money from high-need schools and districts to my affluent schools and districts, but we also worry that there is not in the House bill maintenance of effort requirement. And so you could have states actually able to reduce their overall education spending commitment. So that would put at risk resources that are critical for both district and charter schools that are serving high-need students. So that's a real concern for us as well.

(Steve Ramos): Yes. And one follow-up question. The lady a couple of minutes ago, she talked about the 120-to-1 or 2 ratio of students which - and this is not an opinion on what's right or wrong but in the education system, we will have students that have disability, that have one-to-one relationship with an aid, and yet we have students where the needs but aren't designated where we have 120-to-2 in her example.

So I don't - you know, I think it's great for the disabled child and, you know, we want that. But there just seems to be some unequal or inequality there. How do you address that?

John King: You know, I think, you know, this is part of what's behind the President's call for the additional billion dollars for Title I, as well as additional funding around students with disability. You know, we want to make sure that districts

are meeting their responsibilities to our students with disabilities or fulfilling their IPs and providing the services they need, and we've got to make sure that the services are there for our general education students, for our English learners.

And that requires resources. And, you know, the President's put forward very clear set of priorities around what we think the resource level should be. You should also note that the White House put out a report recently as - and the Department followed up an additional report on the dollars that would be lost in our highest-need districts as a result of some of the proposals currently being considered by Congress.

So we - we're trying to get to a place of greater equity and fear that if the ESEA reauthorization conversation doesn't proceed in the right way we could end up going backwards.

(Steve Ramos): Yes. Agree. We support you.

Marco Davis: Thank you. Thank you very much.

So, operator, do we have - we have time for one more question, if there's anyone just joined the line since, the queue since.

Coordinator: As of this moment, sir, there are no further questions.

Marco Davis: Great. Well, we'll give folks a couple of minutes back of their time then.

I want to thank John King here for joining us today on this Webinar. For sure, hopefully, this information was useful to everyone.

If folks have follow-up questions either for him or for us at the Initiative or just about some of the work of the Department, et cetera, feel free to reach out to us at whieeh@ed.gov. That's our Initiative's acronym, White House Initiative on Educational Excellence for Hispanics. So whieeh@ed.gov and we'll be happy to follow up with you and try to get you the responses and/or information that you need.

And obviously look out for our next monthly Webinar which again will hopefully go back to our regular schedule of third Wednesday of the month. But there'll be more information coming out about that shortly about the topic and the specific scheduling.

Thank you, all, for joining us today and most importantly, thank you for all the work that you all do on behalf of Latino and all students in the nation.

Have a good afternoon.

John King: Thanks so much.

Coordinator: And that concludes today's conference call. Thank you all for your participation. You may now disconnect.

Speaker...

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