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FY 2020 LABOR, HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES, & EDUCATION MEMBER DAY TESTIMONY

Chairwoman DeLauro, Ranking Member Cole, and members of the House Appropriations Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human Services, Education, and Related Agencies, thank you for allowing me this opportunity to provide input on the FY 2020 Appropriations process on behalf of the residents of California's 39th Congressional District.

My district is one of many across this nation that relies on federal funding under your jurisdiction to provide quality and accessible education, support employment and job training programs, and keep families healthy. I want to take this opportunity to highlight just a few examples of the programs under your jurisdiction that benefit my district.

Over the past nine years, my wife and I have fought to ensure that students from underserved communities have access to educational opportunities and programs. I have seen firsthand what quality education can do to create opportunity and improve lives for every person it touches.

That is why I encourage you to prioritize funding for Head Start, one of the most successful school readiness programs serving my district and kids nationwide. In addition to providing education, health, and nutrition services to economically disadvantaged children, the employment support provided to parents helps families reach their highest potential. In San Bernardino County, the Preschool Services Department's Parent Training Program provides mentorship, childcare, and money for gas to parents seeking an education to work in a field they enjoy that pays well. This "whole of family" approach provides stability and inspiration to kids to ensure future success. Increased funding for Head Start is a cost-effective investment in our children that should be supported.

I also urge strong funding for the Pell Grant program. Pell grants help make higher education more affordable, providing a pathway to college for underprivileged who might have thought higher education was unavailable. I am disappointed that the President's budget requested no increase in the maximum Pell Grant, which in 2016-17 covered just 29 percent of the average cost of attendance at a public, four-year university. I urge the committee to support the highest possible funding level for Pell grants.

Additionally, I hope you will take special care to provide funding for TRIO programs. The student support services provided under TRIO help make sure students from disadvantaged backgrounds have the support needed to assist low-income individuals, first-generation college students, veterans, and individuals with disabilities to progress through the academic pipeline.

I encourage you to provide strong funding levels for two jobs training programs that have historically received strong bipartisan support: programs under the Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education (CTE) Act and training and employment services authorized by the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA).

CTE programs play a vital role in ensuring workers remain competitive in high-wage, high-skill, and in-demand career fields, including information technology, healthcare, and the skilled trades. The North Orange County Regional Occupational Program served 17,000 students last year alone, many of whom live in my district. Under the program, these students had the opportunity to earn educational credits and intern at over 400 businesses in North Orange County and find quality jobs for which they received direct training. The program reduces unemployment and provides businesses in the area with specifically trained, immediately productive employees.

Likewise, programs under WIOA are critical to supporting workers and employers alike access jobs and meet employment needs. In San Bernardino County, the Workforce Development Board utilizes WIOA funding to support the “Generation Go!” initiative, designed to help youth in the region enhance job skills, develop leadership qualities, explore career options, participate in adult and peer mentoring opportunities, and take advantage of work experiences. The program connects high school seniors with community colleges and local businesses, providing a direct pipeline to internships and good paying jobs. The program currently serves 200 students and the Board has an ambitious goal of serving 3,000 students by 2021. Federal funding is critical to expanding these common-sense jobs programs in my district.

I thank this committee for your past bipartisan support of funding for Community Health Centers and urge you to continue to provide robust funding to support health centers nationwide. This past weekend I had the privilege of touring a Community Health Center, the St. Jude Neighborhood Health Center in Fullerton, which is one of 14 Community Health Centers in my District. I saw firsthand the excellent care they provide, from primary care services to dental and mental health care, to underserved populations. Like many health centers nationwide, the health care provider is on the frontlines of addressing local health care needs, with mobile health clinics to serve patients where they live, exercise programs to ensure primary care doesn’t stop with just one annual visit, and support for transportation to overcome patient barriers to accessing care.

Ninety percent of the patients who use these facilities are publicly insured through Medicaid or Medicare or have no insurance at all. Without the federal funding this Committee provides, these safety-net providers would be unable to provide such high-quality and cost-effective care. I urge you to provide the highest funding level possible to support Community Health Centers nationwide.

Finally, I would be remiss if I did not raise concerns with the funding provided for the Social Security Administration. Since being sworn into office just three months ago, my office has been inundated with requests for assistance with Social Security benefits. One couple came to my office for help after trying for over five months to get help from the Social Security office in Brea, CA. On their last attempt, after waiting in line for hours, they felt they no longer had any other options except to contact their Congressman for assistance. My office was able to submit an inquiry on their behalf and get the situation resolved the next day.

While my office is always happy to assist constituents in these matters, it is highly concerning that my constituents seeking assistance for a problem that could easily be solved with one simple inquiry by my office was unable to even communicate with Social Security Administration

representatives without Congressional intervention. I urge you to ensure that the Social Security Administration's Limitation on Administrative Expenses language included in your bill provides for the funds necessary to serve beneficiaries, whether that be for ensuring adequate staffing at offices or addressing the hearings backlog.

Thank you again for your time and consideration. I know you have a tough job ahead of you given the constraints of the Budget Control Act. I hope you will keep these stories in mind as you craft the FY 2020 Labor, Health and Human Services, Education, and Related Agencies Appropriations Acts.