

Washington Update, May 14, 2021

Dear Colleagues,

We have had steady developments on the education front in Washington this week, leading up to a crescendo when we see President Biden's full budget proposal just before Memorial Day.

1. President's Detailed Budget to be Released May 27

President Biden will release his full FY 2022 funding proposal on May 27. In April, he release a budget framework (often called a “skinny budget, though there is nothing “skinny” about the numbers in it), a [\\$1.5 trillion proposal](#) that provided the rough contours of his vision for \$753 billion in defense spending and \$769 billion in non-defense discretionary spending. The proposal in the “skinny” budget represents a 41% increase in spending to the Department of Education—the largest increase since the Department's inception in 1979. The full budget proposal will include more details on proposed funding levels for specific programs.

Education advocates will be looking to see how the President's budget proposal aligns with the [American Families Plan](#), which he released a few weeks ago. That \$1.8 trillion plan calls for significant increases in education, including \$200 billion for universal pre-k, \$109 billion for two years of free community college and a \$9 billion investment in teachers – including addressing teacher shortages through expanded preparation and recruitment of diverse candidates. While the American Families Plan is a 10-year plan, its numbers should correlate to the one-year budget proposal he will provide at the end of the month.

The House Appropriations Committee is aiming to start marking up its FY 2022 bills in June, and Democratic leadership is eager to see the President's request before releasing draft bills. Under the leadership of the intrepid Chair, Rep. Rosa DeLauro (D-CT), the Appropriations Committee plans to markup each of the 12 bills beginning in June, with the goal of passing all of the bills before the 4th of July.

As is typical, the Senate is not expected to act on its appropriations bills until after the House moves forward. Meanwhile, the Senate Labor-HHS-Education Appropriations Subcommittee has announced accounts that are eligible for Senators to request community project funding (aka, earmarks). The Senate has identified a few education-related accounts eligible for earmarks, as has the House. *Senate-only education-related accounts eligible for earmarks include:* Fund for the Improvement of Education (FIE), Rehabilitation Services—Demonstration and Training, and Employment and Training Administration in the Department of Labor. *House-only education-related accounts eligible for earmarks include:* Innovation and Improvement, Workforce Investment and Opportunity Act (WIOA), and Demonstration Program in the Department of Labor. *The only account eligible in both the House and the Senate bills is the Higher Ed- Fund for*

the Improvement of Post-Secondary Education. Senators have until July 8 to submit their earmark requests. Stay tuned to find out what requests your Senators will submit.

2. Progress on K-12 School Reopening

American Federation of Teachers President Randi Weingarten delivered a [noteworthy statement](#) on Thursday, outlining her vision to reopen schools, help students recover, and reimagine public education as the country emerges from the COVID-19 crisis. “There is no doubt: Schools must be open. In person. Five days a week. With the space and facilities to do so,” she said. “We know that’s how kids learn best and that prolonged isolation is harmful.” “Educators have yearned to be back in school, with their students. They only asked for two things—a safe workplace during this pandemic and the resources they and their students need to succeed.” She said, “The United States will not be fully back until we are fully back in school. And my union is all in.”

Weingarten’s speech comes on the heels of the CDC formally [adopting a recommendation](#) from a panel of its independent advisers to use Pfizer's COVID-19 vaccine in adolescents age 12 to 15, clearing the final remaining federal hurdle to making the shots available to all Americans as young as 12 years old. CDC Director Dr. Rochelle Walensky called the move "another important step to getting out of the COVID-19 pandemic, and closer to normalcy." It is anticipated that this availability will significantly impact the movement back to full in-person schooling by September, if not sooner.

3. Republicans Move to Block the Teaching of Critical Race Theory in K-12 Schools

Rep. Virginia Foxx (R-NC), the top Republican on the House Education and Labor Committee, is backing two bills aimed at blocking the teaching of critical race theory in K-12 schools. The bills, [Fight Radicalization of Elementary Education Act](#) and the [Protect Equality and Civics Education Act](#) were introduced by fellow North Carolina Republican Reps. Greg Murphy (R-NC) and Madison Cawthorn (R-NC). In essence the two bills prohibit the Department of Education from encouraging school districts to adopt critical race theory curriculum. The measures would cut off federal money to states, local educational agencies or schools that adopt an academic method designed to explore systemic racism in American policies.

In a [statement](#), Rep. Foxx (R-NC) said, “Taxpayer dollars should not be spent to further an anti-American agenda. The Department of Education has displayed a pattern of putting liberal politics over students’ wellbeing. This attempt to push critical race theory will turn vitally important civics classes, which teach about our God-given rights and freedoms, into Socialism 101. This bill will prevent our schools from becoming an echo chamber for Democrat talking points.”

President Biden, however, has highlighted investments to advance racial equity as his fourth pillar on the [Build Back Better Agenda](#)- dating back to his time on the campaign trail. In a related move, he announced this week that he [plans to nominate](#) Catherine Lhamon to serve as Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights at the U.S. Department of Education, a role she previously held in the Obama Administration. The impending nomination of Lhamon, currently a White House adviser, signals plans for an aggressive civil rights push by the Biden Education Department. She will help direct efforts in areas like racial equity, LGBTQ rights, schools' response to sexual assault and harassment, and efforts to root out systemic inequality in schools.

4. **Special Educator, Juliana Urtubey, Named National Teacher of the Year**

Juliana Urtubey, an elementary special education teacher, has been named the 2021 National Teacher of the Year. Urtubey, a National Board-certified teacher, co-teaches at Booker Elementary School in Las Vegas, Nevada. Ms. Urtubey, who was born in Colombia, is a bilingual educator and teaches many English-language learners. She also serves as an instructional strategist at her school, developing supports to meet students' differing academic, social-emotional, and behavioral needs. The Council of Chief State School Officers [announced last week](#) that Ms. Urtubey, was chosen from the shortlist of state finalists. Urtubey "exemplifies the dedication, creativity and heart teachers bring to their students and communities," CCSSO CEO Carissa Moffat Miller said in a press release. First Lady Dr. Jill Biden [surprised](#) Ms. Urtubey with a bouquet of flowers during a visit to her elementary school last week.

Special Education teachers have long been underrepresented as teachers of the year compared to the broader teacher workforce, according to [a new analysis](#) out from University of Florida professors Christopher Redding and Ted Myers, who analyzed the teachers of the year from the past three decades. Urtubey said she is just the third special educator to receive the national honor. Ms. Urtubey has said she wants to use her platform as National Teacher of the Year to advocate for creative ways to recruit and retain teachers of color. Congratulations Ms. Urtubey- you make us all proud!

5. **Professional Development Opportunities**

- The Educator Preparation Laboratory is hosting a webinar: "***Federal Funding Opportunities and Educator Preparation***" on ***Wednesday, May 19, 2021 from 3:00PM-4:15PM ET***: Presenters will lay out the landscape of federal education funding through pandemic relief legislation passed in 2020-21. The focus will be on how this funding might be leveraged to support educator preparation programs, with a specific emphasis on opportunities that have been created for programs to work in collaboration with pk-12 districts. After a broad overview of how these funding sources are structured and allocated, the presentation will address a variety of ways these funds can be used to stabilize and diversify the educator workforce, rebuild and grow the educator pipeline, and connect preparation to other possible funding

priorities on the horizon. This event is free, open to the public, and you can register [here](#).

- The NEA is hosting a panel of diverse educators and parents for a discussion about how to remedy long-standing inequities for students with disabilities. The event, *Fulfilling The Promise to Students with Disabilities: A Conversation and a Call to Action will take place on Tuesday, May 18 at 7:00PM ET*. You can sign up for the event and a recording [here](#).

6. New Resources

- [The Hoover Institute](#) released a series of reports entitled “*How to Improve Our Schools in the Post-COVID Era*” The authors offer a range of recommendations and explore the needs and possibilities for improvement in vital policies and programs have changed since the start of the pandemic.
- [The National Association of Charter School Authorizers](#) has issued a blog, arguing that standardized tests must be a part of education as we emerge from the pandemic. “Statewide, comparable assessments are the best way for educators and policymakers to monitor progress, target support, and intervene when necessary in addressing opportunity and achievement gaps, especially for students who have traditionally been underserved,” policy manager Jason Zwara wrote.
- [Georgetown University Center on Education and the Workforce](#) conducted a thought experiment on the costs of inequality in the US education system. The simulation found that the US economy misses out on \$956 billion dollars per year, along with numerous nonmonetary benefits, as a result of postsecondary attainment gaps by economic status and race/ethnicity.

Wishing you all the glories of the spring!

Best,

Jane and Kait
@janewestdc @brennan_kait