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SUPPORTING STUDENTS AND SCHOOLS: PROMISING PRACTICES TO GET BACK ON TRACK

HEARING

OF THE

COMMITTEE ON HEALTH, EDUCATION, LABOR, AND PENSIONS

UNITED STATES SENATE

ONE HUNDRED SEVENTEENTH CONGRESS

SECOND SESSION

ON

EXAMINING SUPPORTING STUDENTS AND SCHOOLS, FOCUSING ON PROMISING PRACTICES TO GET BACK ON TRACK

JUNE 22, 2022

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C O N T E N T S

STATEMENTS

WEDNESDAY, JUNE 22, 2022

SUPPORTING STUDENTS AND SCHOOLS: PROMISING PRACTICES TO GET BACK ON TRACK

Wednesday, June 22, 2022

U.S. SENATE,
COMMITTEE ON HEALTH, EDUCATION, LABOR, AND PENSIONS,
Washington, DC.

The Committee met, pursuant to notice, at 10:02 a.m., in room G50, Dirksen Senate Office Building, Hon. Patty Murray, Chair of the Committee, presiding.

Present: Senators Murray [presiding], Casey, Murphy, Kaine, Hassan, Smith, Rosen, Cassidy, Braun, Marshall, Scott, and Tuberville.

OPENING STATEMENT OF SENATOR MURRAY

The CHAIR. Good morning. The Senate Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions Committee will please come to order. Today we are having a hearing on the impact of the pandemic on student learning and how schools are helping students get back on track. I will have an opening statement followed by Senator Cassidy, and then we will introduce our witnesses.

After the witnesses give their testimony, Senators will each have 5 minutes for a round of questions. One of our witnesses is joining us by video and I want to thank our Committee staff for making that possible. And while we are unable to have the hearing fully open to the public or media for in-person attendance, live video is available on our Committee website at *help.senate.gov*.

The livestream will include closed captioning. If you are in need of other accommodations, please reach out to the Committee or the Office of Congressional Accessibility Services. When COVID–19 upended daily life, the disruption for schools, and families, and our students was especially severe. I mean, seriously, put yourself in the shoes of any kid from Washington State to Louisiana. These kids lost valuable time in the classroom with their friends and teachers.

They had to confide in a counselor or teacher over Zoom or a phone. And after school activities like sports are banned, got cut totally short. And some kids as we now face the earth shattering loss of a loved one. I hope we can all agree we need to do everything we can to bring stability to our kids' lives, which means keeping our communities safe and preparing better for the fall so our kids can learn safely and grow.

Now, I have been talking to parents and educators and students back in Washington State about what they are going through. And every single conversation drives home how critical it is that we provide the support kids need to recover from the many ways this pandemic affected them. I think it is important to recognize how this pandemic has really made things harder for a lot of kids, particularly students of color, and students from families with low incomes who often lack access to resources.

These students have faced decades of inequitable resources at the schools they attend, undermining these schools' ability to hire experienced teachers and provide advanced coursework options for their students. Kids living in rural communities have struggled, and I believe very strongly that children in the rural Yakima Valley deserve the exact same opportunities as kids in Seattle.

I also want to note today is the anniversary of the landmark Olmstead decision, which affirmed people with disabilities have the right to an integrated life in their communities, at home, at work, and at school.

We have to keep working to make the promises of Olmstead a reality for everyone. And to me, that means considering and meeting the needs of students with disabilities in our policymaking. Now, while we are still learning the full extent of how COVID has impacted our kids' learning, we know enough to know this needs to be a top priority for all of us.

Data shows that kids are months or even years behind where they would be in a typical year. And a deepening educational divide between majority white schools and majority black schools, between wealthier school districts and higher poverty districts. The results of this year's statewide exams made abundantly clear what other data is showing as well.

Our students across every demographic have been affected by this pandemic, and we need to do everything we can to help these students recover. This is something that I have been focused on since the earliest days of this crisis.

It is why I was glad we were able to work across the aisle at the start of this pandemic to make sure our early bipartisan relief packages got schools the resources they needed to help keep students connected during remote learning and reopen for in-person learning as soon as public health officials deemed it safe.

Given the scope of this crisis, I also fought hard to invest $122 billion for schools in the American Rescue Plan, which Democrats passed, by the way, without a single Republican vote. Because recovering from this pandemic and ensuring kids get the resources they need won't just take days. It is going to take months and years. And we cannot shortchange our public schools, our parents, or our kids.

That funding we passed, both in our bipartisan work and through the Democrats' American Rescue Plan, has been critical for getting us to where we are today, to getting the vast majority of schools safely back open for in-person learning, to getting schools additional tests and mass and better ventilation, to supporting mental health and counseling services for our students, to provide

students with summer learning, tutoring, and other opportunities to address the impacts of this pandemic.

That last part is critical. I worked with Members on this Committee to ensure that the American Rescue Plan included specific resources to address learning loss. Because it was so clear to me from talking with just about any parent or teacher from Washington State that getting our kids learning back on track was not going to be like flipping on a switch.

These are resources that were badly needed and are being put to good use in all kinds of ways, like school districts providing additional tutoring and addressing the social and emotional needs of students. But let's be clear, our work is far from over.

What happens next in this pandemic is not a given, especially amid the threat of a fall surge and new variants. We have fought to protect the hard fought progress we have made, including schools—keeping schools safely open for in-person learning. That means passing additional COVID funding so our communities and schools can prepare now to keep students and families safe from whatever this pandemic throws at us next.

These are resources we desperately need. I encourage my colleagues to work with us to make sure schools safely stay open for in-person learning this fall. We need to work together to give our communities more than just empty words. We need to get this COVID funding done immediately because our schools and our communities cannot afford to wait until there is a new variant or a new surge.

Schools and educators need action from Congress now and support and expertise from the Administration so they can plan ahead for the fall to keep our students safely in the classroom because our kids cannot afford to deal with another major setback in their schooling, especially after the hardships of the past few years, the learning loss that has set so many students months and years behind through no fault of their own, the trauma and mental health challenges our kids are facing, the burnout that is causing so many educators to think about leaving a field they love, and the stress on parents' shoulders as they try to get their kids the support they need.

Democrats are working to deliver real solutions for students, schools, parents, and educators on these issues. I want parents to know this. I am in your corner, fighting for you and your kids. I got my start in politics as a parent advocate. I organized moms and dads across my state to save a preschool program. I served on my local school board.

I know how valuable it is to have parents involved, and I want to make sure every child in this country can get an excellent public education that prepares them to succeed in life. And every parent can have their voice heard and be involved in their kids school. Our schools are better off that way. That is why I fought to pass the American Rescue Plan, to deliver the resources our students, educators, and public schools need.

Let's be clear, these resources are helping schools in every single state because kids in every state have affected by this pandemic.

That is why I am focused on working to support families and lower costs and deliver good paying jobs. We are focused on the economy and tackling inflation, so parents actually have the time to ask their kids about school or to help with their homework and to stay involved.

I am glad we are working in a bipartisan way to make progress on so many challenges families are facing right now. Earlier this month, we passed bipartisan legislation on this Committee to lower drug prices, address the formula shortage, and strengthen families' emergency and retirement savings. And we are in the process right now of passing meaningful, bipartisan steps to save lives and keep kids and families safe from gun violence.

I want to thank Senator Murphy, who is here today, in particular for his hard work and leadership on this. Now, this package is, of course, not everything I believe we need to do to end gun violence, not by a mile, but the most extreme option on the table is doing nothing at all. This package will close the boyfriend loophole at the Federal level.

An important step we can take to protect people, especially women, from abusive partners. And it is investments in access to mental health will help stem the mental health crisis our Country is experiencing. Let me be clear, we have to treat America's gun violence crisis as a gun problem, not a mental health problem. We need, I believe, universal background checks, a ban on assault weapons, and more investment in community violence intervention programs.

With that in mind, I am continuing to work with Senator Burr to negotiate a bipartisan mental health package, as well as to address the stress, depression, anxiety, suicide, and so many other mental health challenges this pandemic has made so much worse. And there is more we need to do and so many other challenges that our families and students are facing.

But today, I look forward to hearing from all of our witnesses about how we can tackle one of the biggest, the learning loss caused by this pandemic. And with that, I will turn it over to Senator Cassidy for his opening remarks.

OPENING STATEMENT OF SENATOR CASSIDY

Senator CASSIDY. Good morning, and thank you, Madam Chair. Thank you for scheduling this meeting. And we are here to talk about our students and the enormous, unprecedented learning loss crisis, which is a direct result of school closures. I feel as if I have a kind of personal connection with this.

My wife is the chair of a board for a public charter school addressing the needs of those with dyslexia. At the outset of the pandemic, she sent them all home with computers in which they could monitor what they were doing online, and if they didn't have internet at home, a Wi-Fi device by which they could monitor.

But they had the—the school had the ability to check on which kids were using which programs. And they found that those children who are at the highest academic risk, their children from the lowest socioeconomic background, never opened their computer.

Makes sense, mom may have been at work, single family, without supervision, and the child was not able to go online.

This idea that we were going to make things up by doing things remotely turned out to be totally, tragically false. I thank my witnesses for coming to talk about this issue. Keeping schools closed flew in the face of logic, reasoning, science, I say that as a doctor, and evidence. And now children are facing the consequences of bad decisions made by adults with enormous consequences.

Knowing that now it may take years to overcome the downwardly adjusted trajectory for some of the students further left behind. Now, by the way, money is not the issue. $190 billion is going through the door to support K through 12 education, but only 23 percent has been drawn down. So that is troublesome.

Even with the massive influx of cash, we still, still witnessed massive, widespread school closures months into the pandemic, even after medical professionals said it was safe to go back. Also, despite a Federal vaccination distribution plan that prioritized teachers and other school employees.

But even as more teachers became vaccinated, the goalpost for reopening schools was constantly moved back. Just this year in January in Chicago, teachers unions shut down schools for a week for refusing to return to in-person learning. And while the adults bickered, the students fell further behind. They struggled emotionally and mentally, which also affected their grades.

While the evidence was clear that it was, in fact safe to return to the classroom, teachers unions forced shutdowns to continue, and in many cases, this was enabled by politicians. We know that it was safe to reopen because others in the United States did reopen and it was indeed safe.

Childcare facilities and private schools were able to safely remain open even during the height of the pandemic, when the interest of the student was truly put first, rather than the interest of a union or a politician to pander to the union.

A way to reopen was found and the students got the education and support they needed. As a result of remote learning and shuttered schools, we find ourselves in this current predicament. Scholarly research proves just how detrimental virtual schooling was for students.

Keeping schools closed was detrimental for all, but especially for students from the disadvantaged background. While students in high income schools who had access to resources fell behind academically during remote instruction, their peers at lower income schools struggled even more.

English learners, minority students, students with disabilities, and at least in the experience of the school my wife is involved with, dyslexic students face the brunt of this. Now, we already have problems with achievement gaps. Imagine a kindergarten student who has dyslexia and has yet to be diagnosed or given specific instructions during this time.

The student would surely fall further behind, and the damage done could last for years. The student would have trouble learning to read, which would then make it harder for the student to read,

to learn in the future. Now, these achievement gaps have been exacerbated to an even greater degree.

Remote instruction is for students and parents and families into a crisis which we know could have been avoided. One study out of Sweden, where most primary schools remained open during the duration of the pandemic, showed no general learning loss accrued. Now I want to make it clear that Sweden's decision was not at the expense of teachers' and students' health.

Severe cases of COVID–19 students was very low, despite the decision to keep schools open. GAO, the Government Accounting Office, a nonpartisan entity, found that 85 percent of teachers reported that any form of live instruction, whether fully or partially in-person, was beneficial to their students.

Equally as telling, GAO found that 61 percent of all U.S. teachers had more students experiencing emotional distress than normal during the pandemic. And that's just for the students who remain enrolled. Remote instruction also has led to decreased enrollment across the Nation.

For instance, most remote districts have lost 8.1 percent of their kindergarten students. I will also note that private, parochial, and charter schools were, if allowed, much more likely to remain open. And indeed their attendance increased. Giving parents the power to choose the school that is best for their child was powerfully good for the child. There is a long road ahead. Keeping schools closed has led us directly to this crisis.

On top of the learning loss amassed, students have struggled and are struggling with emotional health. It is clear that the decisions made by adults have inflicted tragedy upon an entire cohort of students.

Current students will feel the effects and consequences potentially years down the line if we do not work together to turn the tide now. For each student, for each year, students are behind academically, learning loss compounds and the issue bleeds into subsequent years, with the next year being worse than the last. We owe students more.

They deserve better from the adults who made decisions daily about their lives and future livelihoods. I thank you again, witnesses, for testifying today. Their insight is valuable as we reflect on what could have been done better and how we move forward to best serve our Nation's students, and their families, and our collective future. I look forward to your testimony, and once more, thank the Chair.

The CHAIR. Thank you. We will now introduce today's witnesses. Our first witness is Dr. Dan Goldhaber. He is the Director of the National Center for Analysis of Longitudinal Data in Education Research at the American Institute for Research. He is also the Director for Education Data and Research at the University of Washington.

Dr. Goldhaber's work focuses on the policies and practices that impact student learning in K–12 schools, like the many different issues that affect our teachers, including recruiting new teachers to the profession and supporting teachers in the classroom to be as

successful as possible, and the connections between students K–12 experiences and their experiences and success after graduation.

Thank you so much for joining us remotely for this hearing, Dr. Goldhaber. Appreciate you doing that. I am always happy to have folks from Washington State bring their voices to the Nation's capital, so great to have you here today. I will turn it over to Senator Murphy to introduce our next witness.

Senator MURPHY. Thank you very much, Madam Chair. Looking forward to this hearing and welcome all of our panelists. I am here to introduce our State Education Commissioner from Connecticut, my friend Charlene Russell-Tucker. She took over as our state's Education Commissioner when Miguel Cardona was selected by President Biden to serve as our Education Secretary.

I will tell you that part of the reason that President Biden selected Secretary Cardona is because Connecticut was able to open our schools faster than many other states, and we did it in a safe way that put our kids in a position to avoid unnecessary learning loss.

During that period of time, it was Commissioner Russell-Tucker, then Deputy Commissioner, who was Secretary Cardona's right hand in making sure that we got our kids and our teachers back in the classroom as fast as possible. She has worked in education policy her entire career.

She has had a specialty in child nutrition. She was President of the Connecticut Academy for Nutrition and Dietetics for a period of time. I will just add that she is someone who understands the needs of the whole child. How a children's nutrition, how a children's social emotional growth is so key to success in school.

When this Committee and you, Madam Chair, led the effort to make sure that our Rescue Plan included funds for summer programing and summer learning, it was Commissioner Russell-Tucker who led Connecticut's sort of model setting effort to get those funds out the door and give access to thousands of low income kids to summer programing, summer camps, and summer learning.

That Connecticut program, I think, has become, as I said, a model many other states are following. I am grateful for her leadership and to hear from her today. Thank you, Madam Chair.

The CHAIR. Thank you. Our next witness is Kurt Russell. He is a high school history teacher at Oberlin High School in Ohio. He is an advisor for his school's student led black student union and the head coach for the school's varsity basketball team. He is a 25 year veteran of the classroom and the 2022 National Teacher of the Year. Congratulations on that honor, Mr. Russell.

I am really glad you could join us today to provide a teacher's perspective on the challenges our kids are facing right now. And thank you as well for all you do for your students, and for sharing your time and expertise with us today. Our final witness is Erin Wall. Ms. Wall is a mother from Cary,North Carolina, with three young children.

Now, no two families who faced the same challenges during this pandemic. But it is pretty clear to me that every family is struggling and that we need to make sure we are listening to parents

and making sure they have a seat at the table when it comes to figuring out how we can support their kids.

Ms. Wall, I am really glad you could join us today to share your family's experience. We look forward to hearing from you as well. With that, we will begin the testimony. Dr. Goldhaber, we will begin with you.

STATEMENT OF DAN GOLDHABER, DIRECTOR, CALDER [NATIONAL CENTER FOR ANALYSIS OF LONGITUDINAL DATA IN EDUCATION RESEARCH AT AMERICAN INSTITUTES FOR RESEARCH], DIRECTOR, CEDR [CENTER FOR EDUCATION DATA AND RESEARCH AT UNIVERSITY OF WASHINGTON], SEATTLE, WA

Mr. GOLDHABER. Thank you. Chair Murray, and Senator Cassidy, Members of the Committee, good morning and thank you for the opportunity to speak with you today. As Senator Murray mentioned, my name is Dan Goldhaber and I direct research centers at the American Institute for Research and the University of Washington. But just to be clear of the opinions that I am going to offer here today are not necessarily reflective of either organization.

The views I will express, however, are informed by work I have been doing over the past year with colleagues in a consortium of school districts. This work is designed to better understand the pandemic's impacts on student learning and the efficacy of school district recovery efforts.

Some of what I am going to talk about was actually very well said in the introductory remarks. But let me just say two things. First, COVID had a devastating impact on student learning. It is really hard to overstate the magnitude of what we and other researchers have documented.

Our analysis of millions of student test scores from last fall found that students were, on average, about 3 months behind what they would have been expected to achieve in math and about 2 months behind in reading. I don't know if these numbers sound big or small but based on the connection between test and future earnings, we estimate that this could result in upwards of $2 trillion in lost future earnings if students don't recover.

Historically, disadvantaged students are considerably further behind. So the pandemic exacerbated existing lines of inequity in student outcomes. But second, while COVID was on average quite bad, it is clearly it did not have the same impact everywhere.

I am sure this comes as no surprise, in fact, it is clear from the introductory remarks that it comes as no surprise, but remote learning was generally very bad for student achievement. So places that were remote longer tended to be further behind.

For instance, high poverty schools that stayed largely remote in the school year 2021, were behind expectations by about 5.5 months in math versus 2 months for those that were in-person for most of 2021.

Math generally, math achievement was generally worse than reading achievement. But there are some districts that we are working with where we see that reading losses were actually larger

than math losses. I think the message here is that districts need to carefully assess the status of their students and not assume that the national trends are necessarily reflective of local student needs.

In the districts that we are working with, we are seeing lots of smart academic recovery investments, high dosage tutoring, various ways of extending, learning time, etcetera. We don't yet to know the efficacy of these investments as part of the work that we are doing, but I want to offer five things that I think we should be doing to help ensure academic recovery.

One, and honestly, this seems a little silly to say, but we need to make sure to keep schools open. While schools were almost all in-person this past school year, some school systems were periodically closed due to a combination of COVID outbreaks and tight labor market. I think to help prevent this, there are two things that can be done.

One, states need to streamline the bureaucracy associated with getting and keeping a substitute teaching credential to make sure that there are enough substitutes. And two, I would urge districts to have plans to reallocate staff so that not all schools close in a district when there are labor shortages.

I also think it is important for districts to protect the schools that are educating the most vulnerable students, too. I think it's important to make sure that district responses to the COVID pandemic add up and that we monitor progress over time. Research can help here by providing estimates of the effects of various interventions like tutoring in summer school.

But states or the Federal Government could take this to the next level with a COVID academic recovery calculator that basically puts together the estimated effects of interventions with the number of students that are receiving them and shows the degree to which this all adds up to changes in student learning at the district level.

I would encourage the Federal Government to require districts to not just submit their ESSER plans, but also make clear that the anticipated effects of their interventions add up to a plausible recovery, and to report out at the end of each year whether students are in fact on a trajectory toward full academic recovery.

Three, districts are spending a good deal of their ESSER funds on teachers and other personnel, and that makes sense. But I am worried that some of that across the board raises or generic retention incentives that we see are solutions to staffing challenges that are kind of a mile wide and just an inch deep and thus not sending really strong signals to the teacher labor market about where there is acute need.

I would urge districts to tailor financial incentives to schools and subjects that are especially hard to staff. Four, I think we need to improve remote learning and—it was bad for my kids too, so I get it firsthand. But it is easy to dismiss remote learning as a failed experiment that we ought to abandon.

But we need to help find ways for kids that are out for sickness in the future and more generally, to allow instruction for kids that are maybe out because of snow days and to reach kids with special-

ized subjects, even in cases where there are only a few kids in a particular district who might be ready or want to take those subjects.

I sort of see digital instruction as part of our future. I also think that the skill set that is necessary for digital instruction is likely to be different than the skill set for teaching in-person, so that it is important that we have some innovation about how we prepare, train, and support teachers for this kind of digital instruction.

Last, I think that we need a sense of urgency, and I frankly fear that a sense of urgency has not fully permeated throughout schools and communities. I urge leaders to make it clear that academic recovery from the pandemic will in some places be a long run project. And that we describe to the community more generally in language that they get the situation.

For instance, describe learning in weeks or months of learning rather than in standard deviation or scale scores. Clear communication is important because we shouldn't view pandemic recovery as being solely taking place in the schoolhouse. Parents need to know what is at stake for their kids, so they know what to do—they know to do their part in the home, including in some cases, getting kids off to summer school.

More broadly, having a clear sense of the stakes involved is important because some of the interventions that school systems may need, like extending the school year, tend to be not so popular.

Knowing the urgency of the situation, provide tools to stakeholders to advocate for sometimes politically challenging interventions. Thank you. And again, I appreciate the opportunity to talk with you today, and I look forward to your questions.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Goldhaber follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF DAN GOLDHABER

Chair Murray, Ranking Member Burr, Members of the Committee, thank you for inviting me to testify today. My name is Dan Goldhaber. I am the director of the National Center for Analysis of Longitudinal Data in Education Research (CALDER) at the American Institutes for Research. I also direct the Center for Education Data and Research at the University of Washington. For the past 25 years, I have been studying schools and how they affect student learning. I also study how schools affect student outcomes later in life, including college attendance and labor market participation. Much of my work focuses on the impact that teachers have on student outcomes and the public policies that influence the composition, distribution, and quality of the teacher workforce.

Over the last year, I have been working with colleagues from NWEA, Harvard University, and Dartmouth College to better understand the impact of the COVID pandemic on student learning and school district recovery efforts.[1] This is what I will focus on in my testimony today. Before I begin, I should note that the views I express here are my own and do not necessarily represent the views of my organizational affiliations or collaborators.

[1] For more information about our project and what we are learning, see *https://caldercenter.org/covid-recovery*. Note that people often refer to the pandemic's impacts on learning (especially test-based measures) using the phrase "learning loss." Learning loss does not necessarily mean that individual student test scores decreased; instead, it means student scores are lower than what we would expect given historical (prepandemic) trends.

COVID Had a Devastating Impact on Student Learning

Consistent with a growing body of research, our team found that COVID has had a devastating impact on student learning.[2] For example, our analysis of millions of students in about 10,000 schools nationwide found on average that students were roughly 3 months behind where they would typically be in math in the fall of 2021.[3]3 In reading, students were roughly 2 months behind.

At the same time, there is clear evidence that COVID exacerbated preexisting inequities in our schools. Like other researchers, we found that students of color (Black and Hispanic students) and students in higher poverty schools experienced larger COVID learning losses than other students. These disparities threaten the decades-long progress the Nation has made on closing racial/ethnic achievement gaps.[4]

Preliminary analyses from NWEA of spring 2022 test data suggest some signs that student achievement is rebounding. But it is clear that there is still an incredible amount of work left to be done.[5] At current rates of improvement, the best-case scenario suggests it would take several years to return to pre-pandemic levels of achievement. And academic recovery will take even longer for historically marginalized students who experienced the worse impacts.

To be blunt, the pandemic put the Nation in a deep academic hole. Unless we climb out, many students will face diminished life prospects and social inequity will increase.

COVID Impacts Were Not the Same Everywhere

As devastating as COVID's impact on student learning has been, the story was not the same everywhere. In the face of uncertainty about in-person schooling and community COVID spread,[6] some school systems opted to remain remote during significant portions of the 2020—21 school year while others returned to in-person learning.[7] At the time, there were lots of competing ideas about school reopenings. I know because we felt some uncertainty about in-person schooling in my own household.

However, in hindsight it has become clear that students who learned remotely during 2020–21 saw larger learning losses than those who returned to in-person school. Because students of color and students in higher poverty schools were less likely to be learning in person, remote learning explains a substantial amount of the widening test score gaps that happened during the pandemic (Goldhaber et al., 2022). Our team estimated that students in high-poverty schools that stayed remote lost the equivalent of about 5.5 months of learning.

Still, even these broad trends can mask important variation. In some districts, for example, we found that learning losses were—contrary to national trends—worse in

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[2] For more on the magnitude of the pandemic's effects on student tests, see Darling-Aduana (2022); Goldhaber, Kane, McEachin, & Morton (2022); and Kuhfeld et al. (2022). Test scores are only one measure of the academic impact of the pandemic. Critics of testing notwithstanding, test scores are a useful measure because they strongly predict later life outcomes (Goldhaber & Ozek, 2019) and line up with other pandemic impacts on schooling, such as challenges with student attendance and engagement (e.g., Carminucci et al., 2021; Ohio Department of Education, 2021), and enrollment in college (Leukhina & Werner, 2021; National Student Clearinghouse Research Center, 2022).

[3] To put that in perspective, the magnitude of the pandemic learning loss is larger than what we saw in the wake of Hurricane Katrina in New Orleans. Fortunately, New Orleans also shows what is possible: with massive investment and changes to the school system, students largely recovered from academically from the effects of Hurricane Katrina (Harris & Larsen, 2021; Sacerdote, 2012).

[4] The National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) has shown a gradual closure of racial/ethnic achievement gaps over the last 30 years. It is quite likely that we will see a reversal of this trend in the short run because of the pandemic.

[5] There is also some optimistic evidence from state assessments that some students may be bouncing back from the pandemic (e.g., Kilbride et al., 2022; Kogan, 2022; Tennessee Department of Education, 2022). While this is encouraging, restoring pre-pandemic student achievement will not address achievement gaps that have long troubled public education.

[6] The evidence about whether in-person schooling led to community spread of COVID is mixed, which is unsurprising given that spread may be influenced by both conditions in schools (social distancing, etc.) and in the broader community (Goldhaber, Kane, McEachin, Morton, Patterson, et al., 2022).

[7] By our calculations, about 50 percent of students nationally returned in person in the fall and spent less than a month remote during the 2020—21 school year. In these districts, where classrooms reopened relatively quickly, student-achievement gaps by race and socioeconomic status widened a bit in reading but, fortunately, not in math.

reading than they were in math. We also found that, while widespread, learning losses were not universal.[8] Such local variation is unsurprising given the different community contexts in which schools operate and differences in how they approached in-person and remote instruction. The point is that while recovery plans need to be big enough to meet the scale of the challenge they also need to respond to local context and avoid blanket solutions.

How Can We Get Back on Track?

In most systems, the academic recovery from COVID will likely take years. It will also require multiple strategies. In the districts our team is working with, leaders are using everything from expanded learning time (e.g., summer school, after school programs, Saturday Academies, intersessions, extended school days and school years), to tutoring, to extra instructional blocks (e.g., double doses of math).[9]

We do not yet know if these strategies are working to help students catch up. But when well implemented and targeted to students who need them the most, these are plausible strategies for recovery. We should, however, be cautious about assuming that the effects of strategies like these can be inferred from prepandemic research estimates. Schools have never tried to implement supplemental academic interventions at the scale they are trying today. Intervention effects at this scale are arguably less certain; there is already evidence, for example, that the tight labor market is making it hard to implement some recovery programs at scale.

In the coming months, our team will be working with our district partners to better understand which of these strategies are working and for whom. In the meantime, I want to highlight six ideas that we should keep in mind on the road to recovery:

1. Keep Schools Open

One of the best things we can do to support COVID recovery is keep schools open. A significant share (roughly 50 percent) of districts plan to spend Elementary and Secondary School Relief Fund (ESSER) dollars on physical plant investments, such as heating, ventilation, and air conditioning (HVAC) systems.[10] These investments should help reduce the spread of COVID and keep schools open for in-person instruction.

But as we saw during the 2021–2022 school year, surging variants (e.g., Omicron) and tight labor markets can still disrupt learning (Goldhaber & Gratz, 2021; Velez, 2021).[11] So, in addition to investing in new HVAC systems, states should other things to help schools stay open. For example, states can make it find substitute teachers by ensuring that bureaucratic processes do not limit qualified people from subbing in schools when teachers are out sick (Goldhaber & Payne, 2022). Beyond expanding the pool of substitutes, states and school districts should also have plans to redeploy teachers to schools with the most vulnerable student populations during a COVID surge. State and Federal Governments could provide guidance for and require the disclosure of staffing plans that prevent the closure of whole school systems during potential future COVID surges.

2. Make Sure District Responses Add Up

Even if they can keep schools open, school districts will still need to use a range of strategies to help students catch up. Business as usual will not be enough. As

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[8] Although the median student experienced lower math test achievement growth during the pandemic than would have been expected based on prepandemic patterns in 89 percent of districts, pandemic test growth did not trail prepandemic trends in 11 percent of districts.

[9] Although some similarities in interventions exist, districts vary widely in the students and schools they target and other key features of the implementation of their initiatives. For example, most tutoring initiatives primarily serve students who are performing below a district-determined threshold; most extended school years, intersessions, and additional instructional blocks serve low-performing schools; and summer learning is generally open to all students, with priority given to disadvantaged and low-performing students. Other key characteristics of the initiatives that vary within and across districts include the intended frequency and duration (i.e., "dose"), student—teacher ratio, provider type and qualifications, mode of instruction (i.e., remote vs. in-person), location of delivery, and time of day.

[10] This estimate comes from FutureEd's June 7 summary of data (2022) compiled by Burbio (2022) on spending plans (note that actual spending may deviate from these plans). Burbio's data cover plans submitted by more than 5,000 local education agencies that represent nearly 75 percent of public school students; see *https://www.future-ed.org/local-covid-relief-spending/*

[11] See data on school disruptions from Burbio: *https://cai.burbio.com/school-opening-tracker/*

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districts implement additional interventions to deal with COVID losses, they should make clear-eyed assessments of whether those interventions are up to the task. Researchers can help here. Estimated effects exist for some of the highest profile interventions that districts are using today, including high-dosage tutoring, longer school days, and summer school.[12] School districts should use these estimates to calculate whether their intervention plans have a plausible chance of helping their students fully recover academically.

States or the Federal Government could help districts make these assessments by supporting a "COVID recovery calculator" that adds up the possible impact of district initiatives and tracks academic improvement over time. Districts need this information now. As one of my colleagues has concluded, too many districts' plans currently appear to fall short of what is needed (Kane, 2022). The broader community also needs to know whether district plans add up to recovery. I would encourage the Federal Government to require districts to not just submit their plans for recovery but also make clear that the anticipated achievement effects of their interventions add up to a plausible recovery.

3. Help Districts Monitor and Adjust

Although a recovery calculator would be useful for broad assessments of recovery plans, we should not overstate its precision. As I noted above, the tight labor market and scale of the recovery effort may mean that even smart strategies do not yield the magnitude of positive effects we might expect based on prepandemic impact estimates. It also seems likely that schools will be unable to meet all students' needs during a regular school day and year. Some students will need more schooling time to fully catch up, requiring districts to work with new partners in extended school programming. We know from an abundance of research that programs that are conceptually well grounded often fail to improve student outcomes (e.g., Heinrich et al., 2010). In the months and years ahead, we must be open to the possibility of failure and adjustment and not assume that plans laid out now are set in concrete.

As districts and schools navigate this uncertainty, they will need data on programs and student outcomes so they can monitor results, learn from bright spots, and adapt their strategies before it is too late. Districts need to map out multiyear targets for student achievement that measure whether students systemwide are on a trajectory that looks like it will result in academic recovery and improvement over time. Over the next 3 years that Federal resources are available for recovery efforts, states and districts should transparently report on their progress at the end of each school year and comparing their progress relative to estimates of what students need to recover.

4. Narrowly Target Spending on Personnel to Areas of Need

Districts are spending a good deal of their ESSER funds on teachers and other personnel. Decades of research show that having a great teacher (Chetty et al., 2014) and a stable teaching staff (Ronfeldt et al., 2013) can make a huge difference in student learning. But when it comes to teacher compensation, some districts appear to be using their ESSER funds to pay for across-the-board "thank you" bonuses or raises for teachers. This approach recognizes the real hardships and pressures teachers have faced during the pandemic and might help retain some teachers, but I do not see it as the most effective use of dollars.

Long-standing research on teachers suggests that districts need to take a more strategic approach. Districts should target funds to hard-to-staff subject areas and hard-to-staff schools to send clear signals to the labor market about both the teaching skills needed and the places where teachers are needed most (Cowan et al., 2016; Goldhaber & Gratz, 2021).[13] Treating all teachers the same ignores important differences across positions, working conditions, and student needs, differences that have important implications for improvement, efficiency, and equity.

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[12] For example, see Figlio et al. (2018), Lynch et al. (2022), Robinson et al. (2021).

[13] Districts should also be cautious about the "fiscal cliff" and the fact that many forms of compensation are pensionable, meaning that compensation today creates downstream costs. In short, raising salaries may be a desirable use of ESSER funds, but once Federal ESSER resources run out, districts may need to plan for ways to pay for personnel brought on with ESSER funding.

5. Improve Remote Learning

It is easy to conclude that remote instruction worked so poorly that we should abandon it. But the possibility of future disruptions due to staffing issues and other crises suggests we need to improve, not abandon remote learning. Beyond the pandemic, remote learning has the potential to address longer-standing problems in schools. For example, although chronic absenteeism has been an issue during COVID (Fortin, 2022), urban schools struggled with attendance long before the pandemic (Gottfried, 2015). Likewise, snow days are here to stay. And in some school districts, schools may not have enough students interested or ready for advanced physics to merit hiring a new physics teacher, but groups of students across systems might. In each of these cases, effective remote instruction/digital learning could help promote student learning for students who are out of school or for students who lack access to teachers in hard-to-staff subject areas.

It is worth remembering that remote learning during the pandemic was created during a crisis. Better systems are possible. To that end, the Institute of Education Sciences (IES) recently expanded its competitions to support education innovation (Schneider, 2022). We need more of this kind of support for innovation in remote learning and education in general. To recover from the pandemic and expand educational opportunity, we need technological innovation. But we also need to innovate in how we prepare, train, and support teachers so that some teachers can specialize in effective digital instruction.

6. Make Sure There's a Sufficient Sense of Urgency

As we move into the next phase of the pandemic, the impulse to get back to "normal" is strong. But it would be a mistake to believe that we are ready to return to normal. Indeed, I fear too many of us lack the sense of urgency needed to meet this moment. If we do not build a sufficient sense of urgency and act quickly, the devastating impact of the pandemic on students' learning and future opportunities will be our legacy.

Leaders need to send clear messages to their communities about the academic challenges students are facing and the importance of addressing them. We need clear communication about the stakes and magnitude of learning loss and recovery. Researchers and professional staff in government must move away from talking about standard deviations and percentiles and toward user-friendly language.[14] Telling a parent that her child is recommended for summer school because he is .3 standard deviations behind what would be expected does not make sense. But telling her that he is a half-year behind where he should be might make summer school feel more urgent.[15]

Leaders will also need to rally political support for academic interventions and frame our collective responsibility to ensure that all students recover. As they clearly communicate about the stakes, leaders will need to encourage families to ensure that their children attend tutoring or summer school if recommended; leaders will need to ask families to help their children learn at home. And in some school districts, leaders will need to rally support for additional funding as ESSER funds run out or prove inadequate (Shores & Stenberg, 2022). State and Federal leaders will need to be ready to provide additional funds to support recovery and be clear about how continued funding will be spent to support students. Finally, communities should track recovery in their schools and hold systems accountable for progress. But communities also need to be flexible and supportive when educators make midcourse corrections and work to improve. As tempting as it is to move on, leaders need to make it clear that academic recovery from the pandemic will, in most places, be a long-term project that will require all of us to learn and improve.

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[14] See, for instance, Clifton (2022).

[15] Beyond the need to avoid technical language, some schools may also need to overcome cultural resistance to delivering bad news to families about how students are doing.

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[SUMMARY STATEMENT OF DAN GOLDHABER]

Over the last year, I have been working with colleagues from NWEA, Harvard University, and Dartmouth College to better understand the COVID pandemic's impact on student learning and school district recovery efforts. I highlight two findings from this work in my testimony:

First, COVID Had a Devastating Impact on Student Learning. Our analysis of millions of test scores last fall found students were on average about 3 months behind in math and 2 months behind in reading. Like other researchers, we also found that historically disadvantaged students were hit the hardest by these losses. The bottom line is that the pandemic put the Nation in a deep academic hole. Unless we dig ourselves out, many students will face diminished life prospects and social inequality will increase.

Second, COVID Impacts Were Not the Same Everywhere. As devastating as COVID's impact on student learning has been, the story was not the same everywhere. Recovery plans need to be big enough to meet the scale of the challenge, but they also need to be responsive to local variation.

My testimony also highlights six ideas for how to get schools and students back on track:

- **1. Keep Schools Open.** Beyond HVAC upgrades, states can help keep schools open by streamlining the credentialling of substitute teachers and helping districts plan to strategically deploy substitutes and teachers in the case of another COVID surge.
- **2. Make Sure District Responses Add Up.** Districts need to make clear-eyed assessments of the potential impact of their recovery-focused interventions and whether they are sufficient to help all students catch up. States or the Federal Government could help these assessments by supporting a "COVID recovery calculator" that adds up the estimated impacts of district initiatives and tracks academic improvement over time.
- **3. Help Districts Monitor and Adjust.** Although interventions like high-dosage tutoring are promising, we do not know yet if recovery interventions at scale will be effective or sufficient. Districts will need to monitor results as they go, learn from bright spots, and adapt as necessary. To assess progress, districts should map out multi-year targets for student achievement on a trajectory toward recovery.
- **4. Narrowly Target Spending on Personnel to Areas of Need.** Districts are spending a good deal of their ESSER funds on teachers and other personnel. Districts should target these funds on hard-to-staff subject areas and hard-to-staff schools to send signals to the labor market about where teachers are needed most.
- **5. Improve Remote Learning.** To recover from the pandemic and expand educational opportunity, we also need to invest in remote learning. This includes technological innovation but also innovation in how we prepare, train, and support teachers to be effective at digital instruction.
- **6. Make Sure There's a Sufficient Sense of Urgency.** As we move into the next phase of the pandemic, the impulse to get back to "normal" is strong. I fear that too many of us lack the sense of urgency this moment demands. Leaders need to make clear that academic recovery from the pandemic will, in most places, be a long-run project that will require all of us to learn and improve.

The CHAIR. Thank you.

Commissioner Russell-Tucker.

STATEMENT OF CHARLENE M. RUSSELL-TUCKER, COMMISSIONER, CONNECTICUT STATE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION, HARTFORD, CT

Ms. RUSSELL-TUCKER. Good morning, Chair Murray, Ranking Member Burr, and Members of the Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions. My name is Charlene Russell-Tucker, and I am the Commissioner of Education for the State of Connecticut. I am honored and excited to testify before you today and to represent a state's response to the impacts of COVID–19 on student learning, and the supports and promising practices underway to maintain the forward momentum.

You have my full testimony that highlights initiatives we have introduced for learning acceleration and enrichment, attendance and engagement, evaluating the investments of our COVID dollars, supporting educators, strengthening student voice, be a voice for change, engage in families and communities, and supporting the social, emotional, and mental health needs of students and school staff.

I would like to underscore, however, that the single most important construct in place in Connecticut on which we have done and built everything since March 2020, is our best in class collabora-

tion, working together, listening to each other in search of common ground for the sake of our children.

To illustrate that point, I will highlight initiatives that served us well and provide a vision for improvement that may also be exemplary to others. The Connecticut State Department of Education fortified its relationship with our sister state agencies, particularly the Connecticut State Department of Public Health at the onset of COVID–19.

The Education and Public Health Departments worked jointly in distributing timely and consistent communication in response to the pandemic's impact on schools. Beginning in August 2020, I launched with DPH, Health and Safety Tuesdays, which are weekly cause that provided opportunities for health and education stakeholders and policymakers to share COVID–19 updates and guidance to triage questions and concerns, and answer life questions.

We have had 75 sessions since 2020 through the end of this school year. With over 1,100 registrants, this became the reliable and credible space for maintaining safe school environments. We had districts that aligned their local COVID team meetings with our Tuesday sessions.

Questions encompass the mundane to the complex, such as the number of days of quarantine for close contacts, specific practices to meet the needs of special education students, medically fragile students requiring medication administration and asthma treatments during the school day, requirements for isolation rooms, upkeep on mechanical ventilation systems, and more.

Both our agencies learned each week what was needed via policy or guidance to navigate the pandemic and how to assist in keeping our schools safely open. The next illustration specifically addresses a learning recovery. We convened the Accelerate CT Task Force to develop a statewide education recovery framework and programing.

Additionally, with a focus on populations disproportionately impact by COVID–19, the Department and Governor Lamont designated more than $16 million in our ESSER relief funds to provide comprehensive supports for students with disabilities whose services were interrupted during the pandemic.

The final illustration is about engaging families. Families school connections, one of the Department's investment priorities for ESSER funds, has been especially critical during the pandemic. When families expressed concern about the return to school in August 2020 and 2021, we held virtual house calls for parents and caregivers in partnerships with the Connecticut Children's Medical Center and the Connecticut Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics. Through providing real time or after the fact translations of up to five languages, we ensured thousands of families were able to engage with these professionals regarding the safe return to school each fall.

What you have heard, and we will see seen my detailed written testimony is this intentionality in working collaboratively toward multifaceted solutions for effective learning recovery and education acceleration.

Together, we all must use this moment to think holistically about the continuum of supports necessary for our children to thrive. I will end my testimony there, and I am happy to take any questions that Members of the Committee may have. Thank you very much.

[The prepared statement of Ms. Russell-Tucker follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF CHARLENE M. RUSSELL-TUCKER

Good morning. Chair Murray and Ranking Member Burr, Committee Members, thank you for having me here today.

My name is Charlene Russell-Tucker, and I am the Commissioner of Education in Connecticut. I am honored to appear before you all today to represent our great state and share information regarding the impacts of the pandemic—March 2020 to today-on learning in my state, and the immense effort of the entire ecosystem that has been mobilized to facilitate learning recovery (academic renewal) that includes addressing the social, emotional, mental, physical and behavioral health needs of our students and school staff. I will address the impacts and supports/promising practices for students; our system of school administrators, educators and school staff, and families; as well as communities.

I want to lead with what makes Connecticut unique—what in Connecticut is referred to as "The Connecticut Difference." This is our longstanding focus on best-in-class collaboration, working together, and listening to one another, in search of common ground for the sake of our students.

Throughout this pandemic, and into recovery, we have made it a hallmark of our response and recovery efforts to work with our various partners and stakeholders—educators and administrators, families, students, advocates, policymakers, local health officials, and more—as often as possible to develop and implement our policies. Policies designed without hearing different perspectives, and without our constituent's input and feedback, are not likely to produce the intended and needed results.

In August 2020, I spearheaded, in robust partnership with the Connecticut Department of Public Health, "Health and Safety Tuesdays—" virtual calls to provide weekly opportunities for superintendents, local health officials, school board members, school nurses, medical advisors, policymakers, teachers' union representatives, and other educational partners to engage in a dialog with the state education agency leaders and our public health epidemiologists and key expert staff for up-to-date and emerging COVID–19 guidance, to triage questions and concerns, and ultimately, forge, build, and maintain trusted relationships. These weekly sessions—75 held since the pandemic began through the end of this school year—had over 1,100 registered participants and became the reliable and credible space for maintaining safe school environments to support learning.

This collaborative approach is the way we build effective policy; we bring it to the people we serve and create numerous opportunities for conversation.

When our families were concerned about returning their students to school in the fall of 2020 and 2021, we held Virtual House Calls for parents and caregivers in partnership with Connecticut Children's Medical Center and the Connecticut Chapter of American Academy of Pediatrics. This gave thousands of families the opportunity to directly ask questions and share concerns with pediatricians and medical experts, and get immediate answers and guidance to COVID–19 and their children's health and safety. This solidified trust among family members regarding the safe return to school each fall.

When planning how to prioritize and implement our Elementary and Secondary Schools Emergency Relief (ESSER) funds, this same methodology was used. We engaged our stakeholders through roundtables, feedback sessions, and focus groups. Some may ask why we do this? We do this be because our students, educators, school staff and families deserve this level of effort from their leaders.

Connecticut has a beautifully diverse student body of more than half-a-million students. Across 205 districts, we have over 1,500 schools and more than 110,000 school staff devoted to helping our students thrive.

Looking more closely at our student population, more than half of students identify as nonwhite; 42.7 percent are eligible for free or reduced-price meals, 16.2 percent are students with disabilities, and 8.2 percent are English learners with more than 145 spoken languages—across our student body over 180 languages are spoken.

Also important to Connecticut's context and background, with each round of ESSER funds distributed to states, Connecticut established the priorities for investing the more than $1.7 billion that has been allocated for education. The priorities at both the state and districts levels are:

- Learning Acceleration, Academic Renewal, and Student Enrichment, which focuses on the academic supports students need to thrive and become well-rounded, engaged citizens upon graduation. (over $729M budgeted for investment statewide)
- Family and Community Connections, which focuses on investing in strengthening or forming new school-family community partnerships to support students. (over $70M budgeted for district investment statewide)
- Social, Emotional, and Mental Health of Students and School Staff, which focuses on supporting students and school staff to re-engage with their school communities as we've returned to in-person learning. (over $183M budgeted for district investment statewide)
- Strategic Use of Technology, Staff Development, and the Digital Divide, which focuses on the importance of in-person learning balanced with the strategic use of technology to expand learning opportunities. (over $147M budgeted for district investment statewide)
- Building Safe and Healthy Schools, which focuses on allocating resources to support the physical health and safety of students and school staff. (over $254M budgeted for investment statewide)

As you can see, these priorities cover the experiences of our students, educators, school staff, and wider communities. It is through thorough guidance issued at the state level, diligence and innovation at the district level, and partnership at the community level, that Connecticut has embarked on a bold and equitable learning recovery from this pandemic.

As of June 10, 2022, all funds have been obligated for all three streams of ESSER funds. The charts and table below contain more information regarding the percent of each stream that has been drawn-down at the district level and expended at the state level.

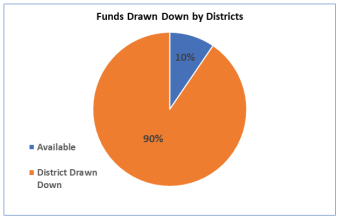
Connecticut Federal COVID Recovery Funds—State Reserve			
	ESSER I	ESSER II	ARP ESSER
Obligated	11,106,393	49,242,646	110,669,666
Expended	7,838,867	10,572,207	10,617,921
Balance	3,267,526	38,670,439	100,051,745
Percent of Funds Expended	70,.58 percent	21.47 percent	9.59 percent

ESSER I (March 2020) – 'Survive'

Total Awarded:
$111 million

Districts (LEAs): $99.9 million

State-level set-aside: $11.1 million



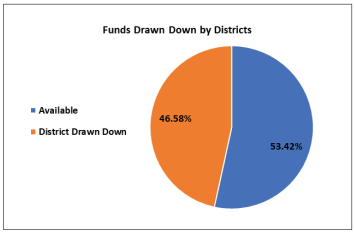
Funds available through 9/30/2022.

ESSER II (December 2020) – 'Thrive'

Total Awarded:
$492.4 million

Districts (LEAs): $443.2 million

State-level set-aside: $49.2 million



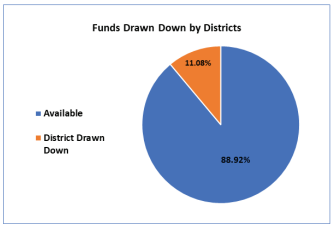
Funds available through 9/30/2023.

ARP ESSER (March 2021) – 'Transform'

Total Awarded: **$1.1 billion**

Districts (LEAs): $995 million
Required reservation:
- *$199 million to address learning loss*

State-level set-aside: $110 million
Required reservation:
- *$55 million to address learning loss*
- *$11 million for summer enrichment*
- *$11 million for afterschool programs*



Funds available through 9/30/2024.

Addressing the Digital Divide

In March 2020, when the pandemic necessitated the closure of schools and the sudden shift to remote learning, we were all faced with an uncertain future. Our state immediately bolstered our relationships across state agencies, districts, and communities—and we provided consistent, timely communication to the field. We had school districts that made a smooth transition seamlessly to remote instruction, while others struggled with paper packets that needed to be picked up by families etc. In June 2020, the Connecticut State Department of Education (CSDE) published results of its "Student Participation in Distance Learning" survey. In sum, CSDE found that:

- Over 90 percent of students who participated in distance learning after class cancellations due to COVID–19 participated through technology-based online learning while fewer than 10 percent participated through other methods (e.g., printed learning materials/packets, 1:1 phone calls, wellness checks).
- Tens of thousands of students statewide experienced the following barriers to greater participation in distance learning:
  - Access to a device in the home—nearly 10 percent (around 50,000 students)
  - Internet access in the home—nearly 6 percent (over 29,000 students)
  - Family, health, and trauma issues—over 17 percent (nearly 92,000 students).

With the first round of ESSER signed into law, we set out to ensure students could access their learning, and this meant addressing the digital divide. Ensuring connectivity among our student body required strong school-family state partnerships, as we had to accurately assess the need in each community.

Under Governor Lamont, we launched the Everybody Learns Initiative which invested more than $43 million to purchase more than 142-thousand laptops, 12-thousand hotspots, and 40-thousand cable broadband vouchers to address the digital divide in Connecticut and empower students and families across the state to learn from home. This initiative brought together the Office of the Governor, Connecticut State Department of Education, Department of Administrative Services, Office of Policy and Management, and the Connecticut Commission for Educational Technology to coordinate with internet companies and school districts.

Focusing on School Attendance and Engagement

Beginning with the 2020–21 school year, we also rolled out two new data collections—weekly collection of Learning Models (e.g., in-person, hybrid, or remote) and Enrollment, as well as the monthly collection of Student Membership and Attendance, to allow us to make data-informed decisions to focus resources on student engagement and participation during the 2020–21 school year.

When we returned to school in Fall of 2020, 34 percent of districts were fully in-person; 60 percent were hybrid; and 6 percent were fully remote. Come December 2020, 42 percent of districts were fully in-person; 30 percent were hybrid; and 28 percent were fully remote. By June 2020 we were proud to announce that, 86 percent of districts were fully in-person; 14 percent were hybrid; and none were fully remote. For the 2021–22 school year, all districts operated fully in-person with extremely rare exceptions of limited closure due to local COVID outbreaks.

In 2020–21, student attendance on days when they learned remotely was substantially lower than on days when they learned in-person. This was true for almost all student groups. Additionally, students from some of our more vulnerable populations including English learners, students from low-income families, and students experiencing homelessness, tended to be learning remotely at greater rates than their peers.

These *just-in-time* data points allowed us to better identify patterns early on around issues with participation so we could proactively work with educators, families, and community partners to address the root causes of chronic absence and disengagement and establish systems of support to reach all of our students.

In September 2020, attendance rates were slightly lower than those in the 2019–20 school year; however, student groups disproportionately impacted by the pandemic experienced substantially lower attendance rates when compared to the previous year.

Come December 2020, the year-to-date chronic absenteeism rate was 21.4 percent. However, the rate was 36.1 percent among English learners, 33.1 percent among students with disabilities, 35.8 percent among students eligible for free meals, and 55.6 percent among students experiencing homelessness.

By the end of the school year, the state average chronic absenteeism rate was 20.7 percent, 33.9 percent among English learners, 32.0 percent among students with disabilities, 36.1 percent among free meal eligible students, and 57.9 percent among students experiencing homelessness.

The state's response to this data collection was the Governor's Learner Engagement and Attendance Program, or LEAP, which was announced in April 2021. Underway in 15 high-needs districts, LEAP is aimed at addressing student chronic absenteeism and disengagement resulting from the COVID–19 pandemic. Local home visitors meet families where they are—at home—and provide the necessary resources to support students' return to school.

Through these visits, families have obtained back-to-school supplies; support with technology, including student laptops and assistance with school district portals; connections with healthcare providers to support student mental health and well-being; and more.

As of December 2021, nearly 7,000 students across the 15 LEAP school districts had received more than 12,000 contacts from home visitor staff to encourage and support increased student attendance in school. This upcoming school year, thanks to financial commitments of our legislature, we are able to continue this program.

Learning Acceleration, Academic Renewal, and Student Enrichment

Learning recovery to me—our definitions may differ slightly—begins with identifying gaps in learning that have occurred during the pandemic. Then, we ensure we institute and bolster evidence-based supports to promote academic achievement and improved outcomes for all students. Importantly, a focus must be placed on student groups disproportionately impacted by the COVID–19 pandemic, including but not limited to students with disabilities, English learners, students experiencing homelessness and students who faced barriers to remote learning in 2020 and 2021.

To objectively gauge the academic impact of the pandemic on student achievement and growth, CSDE committed to administering all state student assessments in Spring 2021 to the fullest extent possible. The purpose of administering these assessments was not to hold the adults accountable for student outcomes during challenging times; instead, it was intended to objectively know how our students were progressing academically through the pandemic so we could collectively target supports and resources where they're needed the most. These assessment data, when coupled with our attendance data, produced clear evidence to show that students who learned in-person lost the least ground academically, as compared to those who learned in hybrid or remote modes. Moreover, the effects were greater in mathematics, and in the elementary and middle grades, but not in high school. A similar finding was seen in our chronic absenteeism analyses where the gap in chronic absence rates between in-person and hybrid students was greater for elementary and middle school students, but not for high school students. These findings informed CSDE's decision to advocate strongly for in-person instruction for all students in 2021–22.

With the third round of ESSER funding, we used our state-level set-aside to extend licenses with online learning/credit recovery platforms, continue the development of our K–8 model curricula, and provide direct financial support to our 58 Family Resource Centers.

With Governor Lamont, we announced the deployment of more than $16 million to provide comprehensive supports for students with disabilities whose services were disrupted during the pandemic. This includes addressing delayed, interrupted, suspended or inaccessible individualized education program (IEP) supports and services; conducting special education evaluations; supporting supplementary tutoring and reading instruction; and providing individualized in-home support.

At the district level, we saw flexible course offerings to promote credit recovery, improvements to parent-school communications, continued technological updates, and more. All approved district ESSER plans, among other grants, are available for anyone to see on Connecticut's electronic grants management system (eGMS) at *connecticut.egrantsmanagement.com*. This information is routinely communicated with families and stakeholders to encourage two-way dialog at the district level regarding ESSER investments.

With the more than $1.1 billion American Rescue Plan ESSER funding coming to Connecticut, learning recovery was certainly at the forefront of our minds—and we knew this was a collective call to action to transform education in Connecticut.

Moving quickly to deploy these funds, we invested more than $8.6 million in our first round of Summer Enrichment Grants, which served more than 108,000 students and was evaluated by our research collaborative, the Connecticut COVID–19 Education Research Collaborative (CCERC). CCERC found that the initiative met its goal of expanding access to summer programming for Connecticut students, including nearly doubling the number of students among camps that also operated in the summer of 2020, and students and staff overwhelmingly enjoyed their camp experiences. This year, our Summer Enrichment grants total more than $12.2 million, and we look forward to learning from another evaluation to guide future investments.

The Department, as well as our legislative counterparts in Connecticut, has recognized the immense need to focus on ensuring our students are reading at grade level and that students who need additional literacy support are identified.

In collaboration with experts and stakeholders, the Department recently announced the launch of the Science of Reading Masterclass, funded through ESSER II. The Masterclass includes statewide professional learning and coaching to district teams to support comprehensive K–3 literacy instruction aligned with the science of reading.

Evaluating Effectiveness and Sustainability

ESSER II funds were used to establish the first-of-its-kind, aforementioned research collaborative called the Connecticut COVID–19 Education Research Collaborative (CCERC). CCERC will not only study the impacts of COVID–19 on students' learning but also study the efficacy of the programs and supports put in place in respond to the pandemic's effects. CCERC brings together researchers from public and private universities across Connecticut to work collaboratively on these evaluations. Among its projects, CCERC is currently conducting a remote learning audit so that we can learn of the impact, challenges, and promising practices brought about by the sudden shift to remote learning in March 2020.

Beyond understanding the impacts of the pandemic, CCERC demonstrates the Department's commitment to programmatic accountability, and sustainability. So, instead of being concerned about a funding cliff that is talked about in many circles, Connecticut is instead focused on building evidence on the effectiveness of its interventions because by knowing what works, we will be able to advocate for continued, sustainable funding at both the state and Federal levels as well as with philanthropy. Connecticut will have the strength of results to say, "fund and sustain what works." This will hopefully serve as a parachute that will help Connecticut's education community land safely from the cliff.

Supporting Educators

Our Connecticut educators and school staff worked heroically throughout the pandemic. In working to keep schools safely open, Connecticut prioritized access to COVID testing, vaccines, and contact tracing support for educators and school staff. However, we were not immune to the nationwide staffing shortages.

We offered staffing flexibilities to districts while ensuring that all Connecticut students have access to appropriately certified, authorized, and permitted educators through collaboration with educator preparation programs across Connecticut. In addition to the Department's efforts, our State Board of Education also approved emergency certification endorsements and flexibilities regarding educator evaluation.

Responding to the need for increase technological support, CSDE used a portion of its ESSER funds to offer the International Society for Technology in Education (ISTE) Summer Learning Academy to Connecticut educators at no cost, and we are currently contracting to provide additional professional development to districts, including, but not limited to, ISTE certification and additional ISTE University courses.

At the district-level, we have seen innovative practices such as offering training workshops on school learning platforms, creating a technology-based Professional Development Hub for educators to expand their expertise in utilizing learning platforms, upgrading all school and district-based technology systems, and more.

CSDE's continued efforts to diversify the state's educator workforce did not cease amidst the pandemic. In fact, in May 2021, Governor Lamont announced we had

met our State Board of Education's 5-year goal of having 10 percent of Connecticut educators be people of color. Continued efforts include Educators Rising, recruits and supports high school students' with interest in the teaching profession, and NextGen Educators, which brings highly motivated students enrolled in educator preparation programs into classrooms to serve as building substitutes. NextGen not only provides additional relief to substitute teacher shortages; it also allows teacher candidates to build strong resumes and rapport with districts.

Finally, we recently announced a $2-million investment in aspiring educators in preparation programs across Connecticut. This investment will help defray costs associated with testing and obtaining educator certification in Connecticut.

Supporting and Engaging Families and Communities

I like to say, "It can't be about them without them." We cannot assess the impact of this pandemic on student learning, educators, and families without authentically engaging with them. CSDE is staunchly committed to two-way dialog with our array of stakeholders—from educators to families to advocates, including our monthly meetings with partners representing unions, superintendents, and school boards, and advocates who represent families.

Family and community engagement is a particular passion of mine. In 2017, I developed and implemented the Commissioner's Roundtable for Family and Community Engagement in Education, which is a diverse constituent group of education stakeholders representing school and district staff, advocacy organizations, parents and guardians, community members, and students, to advise the Commissioner of Education regarding policy and programmatic priorities. The Roundtable meets quarterly to bring authentic parent and community voice to CSDE's products and initiatives; communicate state-level initiatives with families and communities; recommend effective practices to increase successful school and district engagement with families; and provide strategies to empower families in supporting their children's education.

Prior to the pandemic, the Department, the Family Engagement Roundtable, and other partners led the co-creation of a Definition and Framework for family engagement in Connecticut. It states: "Family Engagement is a full, equal, and equitable partnership among families, educators and community partners to promote children's learning and development form birth through college and career." This provided an excellent foundation on which to build our pandemic relief efforts. Authentic partnerships between schools and families have been especially critical during this pandemic, which is why Family and Community Connections is one of our ESSER investment priorities—not just one we set for districts.

We also recently completed our second formal round of ARP ESSER stakeholder forums/surveys just last week. Stakeholders participated in focus groups and were also given the opportunity to complete a survey to provide feedback on current and planned investments of state set-aside funds in family and community connection initiatives. District investments in this area include partnering with non-profit and community agencies to support the creation of parent academies on technology; supporting emotional well-being; and expanding family access to cultural experiences, no-cost after-school programs, and multigenerational activities at local libraries and parks in the community.

Strengthening Student Voice

In November 2021, we launched Voice4Change, the first statewide student participatory budgeting initiative in the country, to give students a direct say in how a portion of the ESSER funding ($1.5M) should be spent across Connecticut schools. With goals of boosting engagement among high school students and sparking lifelong passions for civic engagement, Voice4Change is grounded in the Connecticut State Board of Education's mission emphasizing the importance of preparing students to civically engage in the world around them. Studies have shown that modeling civic engagement in school prepares students to make it a lifelong habit. We are preparing our students to be future leaders by empowering them to make an impact today.

Under the guidance of the same five investment priorities we set forth for districts, students crafted and voted on proposals. What did we see? More than 80 percent of winning proposals addressed the need for more supports for student social, emotional, and mental health. They also saw what worked during the pandemic—best practices they wanted to make permanent in their school going forward, like creative and innovative learning environments such as outdoor classrooms. We are

so proud of the innovation we saw among the students who participated in Voice4Change, and we cannot wait to see these projects come to life this fall.

Supporting the Social, Emotional, and Mental Health Needs of Students and Staff

This pandemic has brought keen attention to the need to address the social, emotional, and mental health needs of our students and school staff. While Connecticut has a longstanding history with this work, COVID–19 has increased the demand for mental health services and supports. ESSER funding has afforded us the opportunity to support resources that can be deployed locally at no cost in districts and to launch the Connecticut Behavioral Health Pilot.

The Behavioral Health Pilot stems from what I call my "Big Audacious Goal," which is to ensure every Connecticut school has a coordinated and sustainable system of care for all K–12 schools to provide comprehensive behavioral and mental health supports and services to students and staff. Currently, our Behavioral Health Pilot is underway in select demographically varied districts in partnership with community partners to assess their mental health support needs. The specific needs and gaps in service will drive the development and implementation of these systems of care. The Pilots will then inform our plans to scale these systems statewide.

I am privileged to live in a state where education receives robust bipartisan support from the legislature. This past session, Connecticut lawmakers passed the most comprehensive mental health bills in the state's history—including grants for schools to hire staff to support student well-being, bolstering the Governor's home-visiting initiative already underway, increasing summer programs' capacity to support the mental health of its campers, and more. We all know that recovery is a long path ahead of us, but I am confident in leveraging the strong partnerships already in place in Connecticut for the benefit of our students.

Mobilizing the Community

While you would be hard pressed to find someone who doesn't believe this pandemic has caused unprecedented disruptions to school, work, and life, disruption is a time to innovate, create, partner, and collaborate so we are constantly learning and growing together.

This is the time to find our collective strengths and intentionally move forward to redesign education with a focus on equitable access to a world class education, including leveraging new and existing strategic partnerships to strengthen our systems of support.

Connecticut is grateful for the financial support provided to spark learning recovery, and we look forward to continued partnership with our Federal counterparts, including the U.S. Department of Education.

As Commissioner, I am part of a strong, nationwide network of state commissioners, and I can guarantee you no two stories are alike. But what I can surely guarantee you is that we wake up every morning with our students, educators, and school staff at the forefront of our minds, because it is when our schools are supported that our students achieve more, and our communities achieve more, and together—we all achieve more.

We must use this moment to think holistically about the continuum of supports necessary for our children to thrive.

Finally, none of the efforts and initiatives that I bring from our great state would be possible without the excellent staff at the CSDE, our sister agencies, particularly the Department of Public Health, our policymakers, and the many education partners in our state. That truly is the Connecticut Difference.

Chair Murray and Ranking Member Burr, HELP Committee Members: thank you once again for the opportunity to share CT's education story with you today. Thank You.

[SUMMARY STATEMENT OF CHARLENE M. RUSSELL-TUCKER]

The Connecticut State Department of Education (CSDE) fortified its relationships with sister agencies, particularly the Connecticut State Department of Public Health (DPH), at the onset of COVID–19. CSDE and DPH distributed timely and consistent communication in response to the pandemic's impact on schools. Beginning in August 2020, CSDE and DPH met weekly with superintendents, local health officials, school board members, school nurses, medical advisors, policymakers, teachers'

union representatives, and other educational partners during "Health and Safety Tuesdays." More than 1,100 were registered for these calls, where CSDE and DPH would share the latest guidance and answer live questions and concerns from the field.

When families expressed concern about the return to school in August 2020 and 2021, CSDE held Virtual House Calls for parents and caregivers in partnership with Connecticut Children's Medical Center and the Connecticut Chapter of American Academy of Pediatrics. Having the ability to ask questions and hear from these professionals solidified trust among family members regarding the safe return to school each fall.

Learning Acceleration, Academic Renewal, and Student Enrichment

CSDE has invested portions of its Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief (ESSER) funds to extend licenses with online learning/credit recovery platforms, award grants for summer enrichment to expand access and affordability, continue the development of our K–8 model curricula, and provide direct financial support to our Family Resource Centers. At the district level, we saw flexible course offerings to promote credit recovery, improvements to parent-school communications, continued technological updates, and more.

With a focus on populations disproportionately impacted by COVID–19, CSDE and Governor Lamont announced the deployment of more than $16 million to provide comprehensive supports for students with disabilities whose services were interrupted during the pandemic. This includes addressing delayed, interrupted, suspended or inaccessible individualized education program (IEP) supports and services; conducting special education evaluations; supporting supplementary tutoring and reading instruction; and providing individualized in-home support.

Strengthening Student Voice

In November 2021, we launched Voice4Change, the first statewide student participatory budgeting initiative in the country, to give students a direct say in how a portion of the ESSER funding ($1.5M) should be spent. With goals of boosting engagement among high school students and sparking lifelong passions for civic engagement, Voice4Change is grounded in the Connecticut State Board of Education's mission emphasizing the importance of preparing students to civically engage in the world around them. Under the guidance of the same five priorities we set forth for districts, students crafted and voted on proposals. More than 80 percent of winning proposals addressed the need for more social, emotional, and mental health supports. They also saw what worked during the pandemic-best practices they wanted to make permanent in their school going forward, like creative and innovative learning environments such as outdoor classrooms. We look forward to monitoring proposals' progress in the fall.

Supporting and Engaging Families and Communities

CSDE is staunchly committed to two-way dialog with our array of stakeholders-from educators to families to advocates. Family school connections have been especially critical during this pandemic, which is why Family and Community Connections is one of CSDE's investment priorities-not just one we set for districts.

Some of our standing meetings including the quarterly Commissioners' Roundtable for Family and Community Engagement, monthly Special Populations Roundtable, and weekly meetings with partners representing unions, superintendents, and school boards. We also recently completed our second formal round of ESSER stakeholder forums/surveys just last week. Stakeholders participated in focus groups and were also given the opportunity to complete a survey to provide feedback on current and planned investments of state set-aside funds.

The CHAIR. Thank you.

Mr. Russell.

STATEMENT OF KURT RUSSELL, 2022 NATIONAL TEACHER OF THE YEAR AND HIGH SCHOOL HISTORY TEACHER, OBERLIN HIGH SCHOOL, OBERLIN, OH

Mr. RUSSELL. Chair Murray, Ranking Member Burr, and Members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify on such an important topic today. My name is Kurt Russell. I have been a high school history teacher at Oberlin High School in Oberlin, Ohio for 25 years and proud to represent teachers nationwide as the 2022 National Teacher of the Year.

Allow me to invite you into room 200 where I have taught my entire career. A place filled with joy and excitement. A safe place for all children. A place of creativity and learning. Room 200 is home. It is a place I enjoy spending time with students. A place where I feel energize.

A place of belonging. Sadly, room 200 has changed. During virtual learning, the room that was bustling with student voices and energy suddenly became silent and dull. The sound of discussions about major events in history, like the role of Margaret Thatcher during the Falkland Wars, was suppressed with hesitance and apathy.

The intentionality of reading and analyzing primary texts to better understand the time period was replaced with summaries. Due to the lack of resources and stable internet connections, students became frustrated and many of my students checked out, ultimately resulting in academic loss.

Students who were once able to orally defend and debate the most sacred historical documents with evidence and supporting details are now using emotions and feelings as answers. Along with this, emotionally, students were not well. Online learning caused many of my students to experience social anxiety and even a fear of returning to school.

As Oberlin returned to a hybrid model in spring of 2021, over two-thirds of students remained home. This further caused an academic gap for students who remained virtual and for those with learning disabilities. As students suffered during online learning, teachers were also affected.

The toll of more responsibilities with stagnant pay has, for some, become unattractive and unbearable. Teachers are leaving the profession in alarming rates, causing school districts to scramble to find replacements. The disregard of teacher voices and expertise when dealing with educational policies is appalling.

It is unfair to blame teachers for the current educational crisis. In order to solve this generational teacher shortage problem, teachers must feel valued and important. Teachers must receive pay comparable to other professions. There must be a concentrated effort to recruit a more diverse teaching pool that better reflects the student population. Thanks to ESSER funding, Oberlin City Schools are able to address some clear problems facing our students and teachers.

We hired literacy and math coaches to work with our struggling students, along with providing tools to equip teachers in better instructional pedagogy. Money was also used to provide a summer

enrichment program to focus on the continuation of summer learning while providing recreational activities that support the social and emotional growth of our students.

Furthermore, Oberlin City Schools hired a social worker to deal with students and faculty trauma. It is the first time my school has had a social worker in my 25 year career. This is my fear.

Despite the unprecedented Federal investments that have shown a positive impact on student growth, what happens when the money is no longer there? Many schools will be forced to let go of quality teachers, end summer enrichment programs, and stop new mental health supports.

Sustaining ESSER funds is vital in ensuring a successful recovery for our students and teachers. Thank you for inviting me today. I look forward to answering your questions.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Russell follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF KURT RUSSELL

Chair Murray, Ranking Member Burr and Members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify on such an important topic today. My name is Kurt Russell. I have been a high school history teacher at Oberlin High School in Oberlin, Ohio for 25 years and am proud to represent teachers nationwide as the 2022 National Teacher of the Year.

As an Oberlin native who teaches at the school that both I and my children attended, I have the unique perspective of having been a student, parent and teacher at Oberlin High School (OHS). Throughout my career, I have been proud to support students outside the classroom and am passionate about my work as an advisor to our Black Student Union, junior class, student council and prom committee and my role as head coach of the varsity boys' basketball team. For those who don't know about Oberlin, it is a small town located about a half an hour outside of Cleveland and is home to Oberlin College. OHS enrolls about 300 students. About half are white and half are students of color, and approximately three-quarters are from economically disadvantaged families.

In the spring of 2020, as with schools nationwide, OHS had to quickly pivot to online learning in response to the COVID–19 pandemic. This online environment was different and difficult for our students. Many students didn't have the necessary equipment or strong enough internet connections to fully engage with and participate in online learning. Students who had previously been active participants in class discussions were now quiet and unwilling to speak up. Some were frustrated by technological challenges, and others were embarrassed by their families' economic circumstances and didn't want classmates to see into their homes. A wide disconnect developed between me and my students.

These challenges forced my colleagues and me to recognize the importance of checking in on our students' well-being. When we were completely virtual, I capitalized on this by having one-on-one conversations with my students who logged into class early, and I began spending the first few minutes of each class checking in with students to see how they were feeling, even if it was asking for a simple virtual thumbs up or down.

In spring 2021, OHS began offering students hybrid learning options, though less than a quarter of students chose to attend in person. With some students in-person and others virtual, teachers had to split their time and attention in an effort to keep two classrooms engaged at once. This proved to be a very difficult task, particularly as the challenges of virtual learning didn't go away for the majority of students—they had trouble hearing lectures, participating in class discussions, and connecting with teachers and peers.

We were thrilled to finally return to full in-person learning in the fall of the 2021–2022 school year. As a result of the challenges posed by the COVID–19 pandemic, Oberlin City School District has been allocated slightly over $3 million among the different COVID relief bills. Our school was quick to begin spending on academic and social-emotional supports for students.

The rest of my testimony will walk through how COVID–19 has impacted my students, how my colleagues and I have worked to combat any negative impacts, how

Federal COVID–19 funds have been used to help support those students succeed, and the need for more teachers to support this work going forward. I hope that these examples successfully highlight how critical this Federal funding for schools is, as teachers like me work daily to combat the learning disruption and emotional trauma caused by the pandemic.

The students I welcomed back after 2 years of virtual and then hybrid learning were not the same students I said goodbye to in March 2020. Prior to the pandemic, I was able to use primary sources to teach history first-hand. Since the pandemic, I feel that I've had to "water down" my curriculum because students can no longer dissect or comprehend the same complex concepts and ideas as before. This literacy loss has impacted all my students from 9th grade general education classes to advanced 12th grade courses. Student writing has suffered as well, as I find that students are not as able to fluidly communicate in writing as they used to and they now rely heavily on internet sources. Their oral communication skills have also declined.

An example that particularly illustrates these changes is a lesson I use every year debating Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher's role in the Falklands War. After the pandemic, I found the majority of students' responses missed the mark—they didn't have a factual backing for arguments or based their arguments on emotions rather than facts. These were students I had previously taught in 9th grade, and who I knew had the skills to be successful in this assignment. When they returned in person in 11th grade, they had lost those skills. I noticed that students with learning disabilities in particular lost confidence in public speaking when presenting their arguments, on top of facing the same challenges with formulating arguments. Again, these were students who had thrived with this type of assignment before the pandemic.

While I have observed deficits in student achievement, the shared experience of the pandemic has also led to student growth in other areas. For example, having been the varsity basketball coach for 15 years, I can clearly see that my players are friendlier with their competition than in prior years—they are just happy to be playing. I've also noticed students are mixing up the groups they're eating lunch with and making a more conscious effort to socialize with different people. It seems as if the shared trauma of the pandemic has pushed students not to take things for granted and to gain a stronger sense of community and take better care of one another.

This type of empathy and kindness can be seen clearly throughout the school. The pandemic reminded our school—both students and teachers—that we provide much more than academic learning, and we are working hard to support students in healing from the trauma caused by the pandemic, whether they are experiencing a new sense of social anxiety or grief over the loss of a loved one.

The need to consider both academic achievement and mental health needs of my students has shifted my perspective as a teacher. I no longer jump right into my lesson plan at the beginning of each class. Instead, I continue the practice I started when we were learning virtually, and now spend a few minutes checking in with students to make sure they are mentally and socially present. There have also been times when our quick check-in lasts a half hour or more when students need the time and space. When students are able to share their concerns about their own lives, or to discuss broader events happening in our Country or across the globe, they're better able to focus on their lesson and are more willing to participate in discussions.

I have always seen basketball as an extension of the classroom and adopted a similar practice with my team. We have "baseline talks" before and after practice, where the only rule is that we don't discuss basketball. This gives students another outlet to express their concerns and get any resources they might need—because practice ends at 5:30 p.m., this often means ensuring my players have enough food for dinner.

In responding to the pandemic, I also engaged families in consistent and new ways. When we were fully virtual, our school decided to hold "Asynchronous Fridays," where we assigned students independent lessons for the day and spent the time we would have been teaching reaching out to and engaging with parents. Even when we returned to the classroom in person, maintaining strong relationships has been a priority—OHS has given us two prep periods rather than just one, which gives us additional time to make sure families are engaged and involved in their student's learning.

While I am trying to make my classroom and the extracurricular activities I lead safe and nurturing environments for students, my school needs additional assistance as it tries to navigate post-pandemic learning.

We appreciate the resources provided to our school from the CARES Act, the Coronavirus Response and Relief Supplemental Appropriations Act, and the American Rescue Plan. They have been critical in getting much-needed support to our schools, teachers, and students. Our school has implemented many new initiatives and policies with this funding. These initiatives include the hiring of a new social worker—the first school social worker I've had in my building in my 25-year career—who works with about 10 percent of students, those who are struggling the most in school. Having a social worker in our school makes me more confident as a teacher, as I know that there is somebody who is committed to supporting student mental health. I have also seen the confidence of my students grow after working with the social worker. Our social worker also created the school's first food and clothing bank for students in need.

Additionally, OHS used Federal COVID–19 relief funds to hire both a reading coach and a math coach to provide targeted support to struggling students. Collectively, these coaches work with roughly 60 percent of students, and I have seen how their support increase students' engagement with, and comprehension of, lessons. These coaches work at all levels across the district. Additionally, the funding has allowed us to provide after-school tutoring for students at the secondary level, and, for younger students, an 8-week summer enrichment program that combines academic lessons in math, science and reading with fun summer recreation activities.

Our school has also invested in student morale, as we now have quarterly "fun days" where we recognize student work and celebrate with a fun activity—whether it's an ice cream sundae bar or a field day. Additionally, we have hired an individual to help lead a girls program called "Girls Rock" to help empower young women in our school.

The funding has also helped hire additional custodians to help make sure our schools are clean and healthy environments for students and staff.

Collectively, these programs are strengthening our school's academic and social success and giving us hope for a full recovery in the future. We will continue to invest in our kids to make sure we can get our students back on track with learning and engaged in school, while also paying attention to their non-academic needs. I do have concerns that, while we have the resources now for these new staff and programs, once COVID–19 relief funding runs out we may not be able to continue these critical supports. Having Oberlin College in our school district is a great asset academically, but has, in the past, limited the funding the district can raise locally because the College's properties are non-taxable. We ask for continued help and support from Congress to be able to sustain these important and impactful efforts into the future.

While we are doing a lot of positive things in our school, we have a long way to go. Continuing all of this essential work to help students will require excellent teachers at OHS and across the country, just as we are facing a massive teacher shortage.

As one example, OHS has recently had trouble filling a job for a math teacher. We usually had a wide pool of qualified applicants and found excellent teachers, even in harder-to-fill subjects like math and science. Now, there are maybe one or two people applying for these jobs. Although our district's pay is around the median for our area, and our district is considered relatively high-need, we simply didn't have this problem before the pandemic.

There are several reasons why teachers are leaving the profession, including low pay and increasing demands. Additionally, there is a lack of respect for the profession. Teachers are truly the experts in the classroom, but in many places aren't treated as such. Instead, they're being told what to teach without having a say in setting education policy.

As we look to stop the exodus of current teachers, we also must look at how we can attract new teachers to the profession. Along with a focus on higher pay and student loan forgiveness, we should also support grassroots programs like Educators Rising that seek to identify students who want to pursue jobs as teachers early in their academic careers. Throughout all of this work, we should commit to diversifying the teaching profession, so that teachers look more like the students in our schools.

Though the pandemic presented huge challenges for our students, academically and emotionally, they are resilient and have the support of communities and teach-

ers behind them. Like my colleagues in Oberlin and I, teachers across the country are committed to doing everything in our power to help students recover from the pandemic.

Resources provided through the Federal COVID relief bills have made a huge difference to our ability to help students accelerate their learning and work through trauma brought about by the pandemic. We need more excellent educators to help us continue this essential work over the long run. I urge you to look at the great work going on in your states and across the country to help students' recovery and to continue funding these programs.

Thank you for your time and consideration, and I look forward to answering your questions.

[SUMMARY STATEMENT OF KURT RUSSELL]

Students' Struggles During Virtual Learning + Impact on Academics

The online learning environment was difficult for students. Many students didn't have the necessary equipment or strong enough internet connections to fully engage with and participate in online learning. Students who had previously been active participants in class discussions were now quiet and unwilling to speak up. Some were frustrated by technological challenges, and others were embarrassed by their families' economic circumstances and didn't want classmates to see into their homes. A wide disconnect developed between me and my students.

When we returned to school, I saw a deficit in students' academic skills. I've had to "water down" my curriculum because students can no longer dissect or comprehend the primary sources I used to use. I've seen this drop in students at all levels, from 9th grade general education classes to advanced 12th grade courses. Student writing has suffered as well, as I find that students are not as able to fluidly communicate in writing as they used to and they now rely heavily on internet sources. Their oral communication skills have also declined.

Importance of Federal COVID Relief

Federal COVID relief has been critical in getting much-needed support to our schools, teachers, and students. My school has hired a social worker, the first I've had in my building in my 25-year career. Additionally, Oberlin High School used Federal COVID–19 relief funds to hire both a reading coach and a math coach to provide targeted support to struggling students.

Collectively, these new staff, and other programs we have implemented, are strengthening our school's academic and social success and giving us hope for a full recovery. I do have concerns that, while we have the resources now for these new staff and programs, once COVID–19 relief funding runs out we may not be able to continue these critical supports. We ask for continued help and support from Congress to be able to sustain these important and impactful efforts.

Teacher Shortage

Continuing all of this essential work to help students will require excellent teachers at OHS and across the country, just as we are facing a massive teacher shortage.

There are several reasons why teachers are leaving the profession, including low pay, increasing demands and, particularly, a lack of respect for the profession. Teachers are truly experts in the classroom, but in many places aren't treated as such. Instead, they're being told what to teach without having a say in setting education policy.

Along with a focus on higher pay and student loan forgiveness, we should also work to attract new teachers through programs that identify prospective teachers early in their academic careers. And throughout all of this work, we should commit to diversifying the teaching profession, so that teachers look more like the students in our schools.

The CHAIR. Thank you.

Ms. Wall.

STATEMENT OF ERIN WALL, PARENT, CARY, NC

Ms. WALL. Good morning. My name is Erin Wall, and I am from Cary, North Carolina. Chairwoman Murray, Ranking Member Burr, and Members of the Senate HELP Committee, thank you for having me today and for convening a hearing on such an important topic. I have three young children ages 10, 7, and 5.

My oldest son, Carter, has a learning disability which causes significant developmental delays. At the age of four, Carter entered the Wake County public school system through North Carolina's Child Find. Since that time, he has received services including physical therapy, speech therapy, occupational therapy, and special education services.

I will never forget that Friday in March 2020 when school as we knew it came to a screeching halt and teachers, students, and parents were thrust into the unknown world of virtual learning. From that point until the start of the following school year, Carter did not receive any of his required services.

The following school year, Wayne County schools were virtual, which included special education services. One of Carter's biggest challenges in school is his focus. Therefore, someone had to be physically present and engaged with him during his virtual learning. Considering we had a front row seat, we saw the struggles teachers and students had in trying to adapt.

We observed that teachers were spending most of their time trying to focus the students and engage them in their lessons. Students were often distracted and unable to navigate the technical aspects of being online at such a young age. A virtual platform is a huge transition, and for this community of children, change is very hard. The therapies that Carter receives require a hands on approach.

These are interactions that often use personal touch and demonstration to achieve success in reaching his goals. Another important part of Carter's IEP is to buildupon and improve his social skills. This requires the teacher to encourage and help Carter navigate these social interactions, which simply cannot be done in a virtual environment. At the same time, we also had to consider the educational needs of our youngest boys.

Our middle child was a rising kindergartner, and we enrolled him in a private school which provided in-person instruction. Our youngest son also intended an in-person preschool program the same year.

It became clear to us that we could not rely on the public school system to provide in-person instruction, so we had to take matters into our own hands. We hired a tutor to work with Carter daily. In order for Carter to meet his specific educational goals, we had to choose in-person instruction with the tutor over virtual learning.

Because of Carter's learning lost experience over this timeframe, we were forced to continue his tutoring on a weekly basis to help bridge the gap. Fortunately, we are blessed to have the resources for this outside service. However, most parents in this situation do not. Up to this point, Carter has always experienced some delays.

However, that gap has grown even wider because of the length of the pandemic and continued disruptions to his learning.

Just this year, our son's school has experienced the loss of several dedicated educators. For example, Carter's speech language pathologist left the school at the beginning of the December, and that position was never filled, and the vacancy remained until the end of the school year.

Carter went 7 months without speech services. On multiple occasions, I was reassured that they were working diligently to fill the position and that Carter was owed compensatory services. However, not only was the position not filled, he did not receive any compensatory services during those 7 months.

I also want to focus on the important role of special education teachers and what they face to care for children, both educationally and mentally. Special education teachers in the State of North Carolina provide direct instruction and case management that includes paperwork, reports, and meetings. There simply isn't enough time in a school day for all the roles that special education are asked to perform.

Because of all the responsibilities that special education teachers are required, they have very little time to work with the children, which is their passion. Now is the time for teachers, students, parents, and all stakeholders to come together to work on solutions and improvements. Everyone needs to take a step back and really look at our children. A lot of them are not okay.

I was recently told by one of Carter's therapists that even if we think a child seems okay, most of them are not. She spends most of her sessions allowing kids to talk and to be heard. We need to slow down, teach the basics, stop, look, and smile at the kids, and give them what they have been missing for 2 years.

Many children entered school this past year, nervous, behind, and unsure. They need to be cared for. School systems need to work closer with teachers and parents to problem, solve and develop feasible and meaningful solutions. As parents, we need more support from the school to help our children at home.

Brainstorming what might be beneficial, parents needs to be in collaboration with teachers to develop strategies to extend their learning at home. In closing, the fallout from the pandemic resulted in setbacks for our children academically, socially, and emotionally.

There isn't a quick fix, but I certainly hope that we can come together to create some solutions to help us move forward. Students, teachers, and parents are crying for help. Our boys would not be where they are today if it weren't for the village of teachers and therapists that have supported and love them along the way.

We must take steps to provide support for students, teachers, and parents for the sake of everyone's future. Thank you for your time.

[The prepared statement of Ms. Wall follows.]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF ERIN WALL

Good morning. My name is Erin Wall and I'm from Cary, NC. Chairman Murray, Ranking Member Burr and Members of the Senate HELP Committee, thank you for having me today and for convening a hearing on such an important topic. I have three young children ages 10, 7 and 5. My oldest son, Carter, has a learning disability which causes significant developmental delays. At the age of four, Carter entered the Wake County Public School system through NC Child Find. Since that time, he has received services including physical therapy, speech therapy, occupational therapy, and special education services.

I'll never forget that Friday in March 2020 when school as we knew it came to a screeching halt and teachers, students and parents alike were thrust into the unknown world of virtual learning. From that point until the start of the following school year Carter did not receive any of his required services.

The following school year, Wake County schools were virtual which included special education services. One of Carter's biggest challenges in school in his focus; therefore, someone had to be physically present and engaged with him during his virtual learning. Considering we had a front row seat we saw the struggles teachers and students had in trying to adapt. We observed that teachers were spending most of their time trying to focus the students and engage them in their lessons. Students were often distracted and unable to navigate the technical aspects of being online at this young age. A virtual platform is a huge transition and for this community of children change is hard.

The therapies that Carter receives require a hands-on approach. These are interactions that often use personal touch and demonstration to achieve success in reaching his goals. Another important part of Carter's IEP is to build upon and improve his social skills. This requires the teacher to encourage and help Carter navigate these social interactions which simply cannot be done in a virtual environment.

At the same time, we also had to consider the educational needs of our youngest boys. Our middle child was a rising kindergartener, and we enrolled him in a private school which provided in-person instruction. Our youngest son also attended an in-person preschool program the same year.

It became clear to us that we could not rely on the public school system to provide in-person instruction, so we had to take matters into our own hands. We hired a tutor to work with Carter daily. In order for Carter to meet his specific educational goals we had to choose in-person instruction with the tutor over virtual learning. Because of Carter's learning loss experienced over this time frame we are forced to continue his tutoring on a weekly basis to help bridge the gap. Fortunately, we are blessed to have the resources for this outside service; however, most parents in this situation do not. Up to this point Carter has always experienced some delays; however, that gap has grown even wider because of the length of the pandemic and continued disruptions to his learning.

Just this year, our son's school has experienced the loss of several dedicated educators. For example, Carter's speech language pathologist left his school at the beginning of December and that position was never filled and the vacancy remained until the end of the school year. Carter went 7 months without speech services. On multiple occasions I was reassured that they were working diligently to fill the position and that Carter was owed compensatory services. However, not only was the position not filled he did not receive any compensatory services during those 7 months.

I also want to focus on the important role of special education teachers and what they face to care for children both educationally and mentally. Special education teachers in the State of North Carolina provide direct instruction and case management that includes paperwork, reports, and meetings. There simply isn't enough time in a school day for all the roles that special education teachers are asked to perform. Because of all the responsibilities special education teachers are required they have very little time to work with children which is their passion.

Now is the time for teachers, students, parents and all stakeholders to come together to work on solutions and improvements. Everyone needs to take a step back and really look at our children. A lot of them are not okay. I was recently told by one of Carter's therapists that even if we think a child seems okay most of them are not. She spends most of her sessions allowing kids to talk and be heard. We need to slow down, teach the basics, stop, look, and smile at the kids and give them what they've been missing for 2 years. So many children entered school this past year behind, nervous, and unsure. They need to be cared for. School systems need

to work closer with teachers and parents to problem solve and develop feasible and meaningful solutions.

As parents we need more support from the school to help our children at home. In brainstorming in what might be beneficial, parents need to be in collaboration with teachers to develop strategies to extend their learning at home.

In closing, the fallout from the pandemic resulted in setbacks for our children academically, socially, and emotionally. There isn't a quick fix, but I certainly hope that we can come together to create some solutions to help us move forward. Students, teachers and parents are crying for help. Our boys would not be where they are today if it weren't for the village of teachers and therapists that have supported and loved them along the way. We must take steps to provide support for students, teachers, and parents for the sake of everyone's future.

Thank you for your time.

[SUMMARY STATEMENT OF ERIN WALL]

My name is Erin Wall and I have three young children ages 10, 7 and 5. My oldest son, Carter, has a learning disability which causes significant developmental delays. At the age of four, Carter entered the Wake County Public School system and has since received special education services and related therapies.

Due to the pandemic and disruptions to the school year, students have experienced significant learning loss. We are witnessed to the struggle our school system continues to have to keep qualified personnel and to address the deficits in learning the students are now facing.

During the pandemic, in order for Carter to meet his specific educational goals and bridge the learning gap we had to choose in-person instruction with a tutor over virtual learning. We are blessed to have the resources for this outside service; however, most parents in this situation do not. If we don't come together to address this problem now our educational systems will worsen. The fallout from the pandemic resulted in setbacks for our children academically, socially, and emotionally. There isn't a quick fix, but I certainly hope that we can come together to create some solutions to help us move forward.

The CHAIR. Thank you so much to all of our witnesses today. We really appreciate your being here and your testimony. We will now begin a round of 5 minute questions of our witnesses. I ask my colleagues to please keep track of your clock and stay within the 5-minutes.

My first question is for Mr. Russell. And first of all, Mr. Russell, congratulations on being selected 2022 Teacher of the Year, and thank you for all the work you do educating our kids.

You know, the past few school years have been incredibly challenging for educators, and I know the tragedies in Uvalde and elsewhere only add to that strain as educators have to help students navigate the heartbreak that comes with these far too frequent school shootings as well.

Amid all of this, our educators like yourself continue to work hard to get our students back on track. Mr. Russell, I wanted to ask you today, what can districts, and states and the Federal Government do to better help our educators, including by addressing burnout and supporting their mental health challenges that they face today so that you are able to focus on what you are expert in, which is teaching our students?

Mr. RUSSELL. Thank you so much, Chair, for that question. There are several levels to that—to my answer. I think, Number 1 is the responsibility that teachers have now is demanding. And there has to be a way in which we could elevate teachers by com-

pensation is one, in regards to making sure that the level of compensation is equal to the responsibility that they have.

I think Number 2 is for teachers to have a voice, for teachers to sit down at the table with legislation and create policies. Teachers are the experts. Teachers are the ones that are on the grind every day in the classroom. I believe that teachers must have the respect to be able to sit down and make policy changes along with legislation.

The CHAIR. Thank you. My next question is for Commissioner Russell-Tucker and Dr. Goldhaber. The last few years have been incredibly tough on our students and our families and our educators.

Given this pandemic's impact on learning, we need to do everything we can to help our students get back up to speed and successful, which I think is why it was so important the American Rescue Plan provided schools with the resources they need to stay open and to address students' learning loss, with a particular focus on addressing the disproportionate impact of the pandemic on students of color, students with disabilities, students from families with low income, and so on.

Commissioner, let me start with you. Congress required states to address learning loss with the American Rescue Plan funding. How is Connecticut using this funding to help our schools and districts and students address learning loss and address their academic, social, emotional needs?

Ms. RUSSELL-TUCKER. Thank you, Chair, for that question as well. So critically important. I am really pleased to say that we were very intentional in Connecticut to make sure that we had investment priorities. And to your point, the learning recovery and acceleration was a big part of that.

Our districts are actually investing over $700 million across all the districts in that particular domain. They are looking at smaller class sizes, bringing in tutors in that particular space. But you are also so clear, it is so clear that we have to address fundamentally the social, emotional, and mental health well-being of not only our students, but for our staff.

That was another funding priority that Connecticut put in place not just for our district, but also for ourselves with our state set aside funding. And in that particular priority area, over $183 million have been invested in that space. It is hiring additional support staff, social workers, and counselors to be in that space.

In some cases, it is working with partner organizations that are providers of services that can also support them in that category as well. So those are the kinds of things that we are working on.

In Connecticut, I talk about my big audacious goal, which is to make sure that every school building has that level of behavioral health supports in it to make sure that children can thrive, and the teachers can also be supported.

The CHAIR. Thank you. Dr. Goldhaber, what strategies are you seeing work best to help boost students learning?

Mr. GOLDHABER. Well, I want to be clear that we don't have evidence yet about what is actually working based on the current in-

vestments. But there is lots of evidence from pre-pandemic investments about what works.

There are some of the strategies that I outlined earlier that seem to have quite large effects on student achievement. High dosage tutoring, which is small group tutoring at least three or four times a week throughout the school year, that has been shown to have quite large impacts on student achievement. Double dosing of academic subjects.

Where some where students may get extra subjects in math or reading. That has larger impacts. And then various ways of extending the amount of learning time that students get. So extended school days, Saturday school, intersession extended school year, and summer school.

All of those are strategies that make good sense. But again, as I mentioned before, are a little bit politically contentious.

The CHAIR. Thank you. Finally, Ms. Wall, these have been pretty difficult years and I think parents' concern about their students' learning is at the highest level since the start of the pandemic. As a parent of three children, looking forward, how would you like to see schools and districts use these funds from the American Rescue Plan and better communicate with families?

Ms. WALL. Thank you for the question, Chairwoman. As everyone has kind of mentioned, I think it is important for the teachers and parents in the schools to come together to try to help address these needs for the children. And coming out these past 2 years, children are faced with a lot of deficits in their learning. I think that those need to be identified by the teachers.

Then the teachers are—they need training and resources to help those children. I feel like children have been promoted to the next grade level and those teachers are required to teach at that grade level. However, those children are behind in math and in reading.

For instance, our son Carter, he is still learning how to read, and he is going to be going into the fourth grade next year. And so a fourth grade teacher doesn't have the training and the resources to teach a child phonics and how to continue their reading skills. I feel like they are not able to fully help him.

I feel like giving teachers the training and the resources they need so that they can then identify those learning gaps for the children and then working with parents too, so parents can then help their children at home and work outside of the school setting to try to help them move forward.

The CHAIR. Thank you very much.

Senator Cassidy.

Senator CASSIDY. Thank you. Mr. Russell, once more man, how impressive is that? I feel like you are the LeBron James of secondary and primary school teaching. So just hats off to you. That said, Dr. Goldhaber, okay, you say that 5 months is the average for children with dyslexia versus an average of 2 months for all students.

What if you just compare students who are lower socioeconomic class versus higher socioeconomic class? What is the difference in math progression in that spread, if you will?

Mr. GOLDHABER. Well, actually, the comparison was not for dyslexic students with——

Senator CASSIDY. No, I am sorry—I shouldn't have—lower socioeconomic class, lower socioeconomic versus higher socioeconomic. If you just compare those two without the overall average, what is the difference?

Mr. GOLDHABER. Oh, the difference is and these are around about but roughly five and a half months behind for students in high poverty schools versus more like a month and a half to 2 months in—for students that are in low poverty schools.

Senator CASSIDY. But did you—in a low poverty school, that is a mix of students. That is, those children who are both from poor families as well as those who are richer. Is just that the average is that the students are richer. Were you able to differentiate again between students who come from a census track of high poverty versus a census track of low poverty?

Mr. GOLDHABER. In our study, we couldn't differentiate at the individual school level based on poverty.

Senator CASSIDY. Okay, let me stop you there, because I have limited time. Ms. Wall creates a very compelling case that children with disability—learning disability or disability in general are particularly vulnerable. Did any of your research look at the impact upon children with—now I will go to dyslexia, but just pick learning disability in general versus those who do not have a learning disability?

Mr. GOLDHABER. Again, I don't want to rely on our research, but I have read a lot of research by other researchers and the answer is that more vulnerable students were clearly made worse off by the pandemic. It is not clear that is solely about what was going on in the schools, as I think you mentioned in your opening remarks.

Some of this may be about what was happening in the homes from folks from different backgrounds, too.

Senator CASSIDY. Did you track in your—we have talked about the 8.1 percent of children leaving public schools, but we have seen an uptick of about 240,000 of children going into charter schools. And anecdotally, there has been increased enrollment in private and parochial schools. Did your data track the migration of such students?

Mr. GOLDHABER. No, that was not the focus of our work.

Senator CASSIDY. Ms. Tucker, in your experience in Connecticut, have you tracked, I don't know of the fallen enrollment in public schools in Connecticut, but assuming that there was some decrease in enrollment, did you track what percent of those students who are no longer in public school are either in a charter, a private, or parochial school?

Ms. RUSSELL-TUCKER. Thank you, Senator, for the question. We have a really robust data system that allows us to do data tracking of our students. Specifically, we have looked to see when we did an assessment in the previous year, basically how students did based on their learning models.

We have looked, out enrollments are down and also now coming back up, and we are able to disaggregate. I don't have those specific numbers for you, but we are able to disaggregate our data and we are able to tell how all those student groups are performing.

To the point that was made earlier, certainly they were all impacted, or students with disabilities and I know it is a concern of yours, were disproportionately impacted wider areas than a student group that we are working very hard to address those needs.

Senator CASSIDY. But specifically, were you able to track whether or not the children who disenrolled from a public school subsequently enrolled in a charter—I don't know if you have charters, I assume that you do, a charter, a private, or religious school?

Ms. RUSSELL-TUCKER. We—I don't have that level of data——

Senator CASSIDY. Okay, let me stop you there. I happen to know that the people who literally wrote the book on dyslexia, Dr. Shaywitz in Yale, and one in five children are affected by dyslexia. I don't know if you screened first—the first part of the question is if you screen for dyslexia.

Second, do you have specific data as regards how those children did during the kind of remote learning period, subsequent to the remote learning period. Did they fall further behind than their peers independently of their income level of the family?

Ms. RUSSELL-TUCKER. We have looked at the student with disabilities. We can disaggregate. I don't have the information specifically for students identified with dyslexia, but those students with disabilities in general, certainly were disproportionately impacted.

Senator CASSIDY. Does Connecticut screen and then subsequently test to confirm if somebody is dyslexic? Do you screen children for dyslexia?

Ms. RUSSELL-TUCKER. That is occurring. It is an area of concern for us this past session. An Office of Dyslexia and Reading Disabilities was placed by our legislature in our office to really get closer to those issues, to work with also higher education. Make sure that our teachers——

Senator CASSIDY. Okay. I am sorry. She is about to rein me in.

Ms. RUSSELL-TUCKER. Okay.

Senator CASSIDY. Can you tell me what percent of your students have been identified as dyslexic?

Ms. RUSSELL-TUCKER. I don't have that specific number for you, but we will get back to you.

Senator CASSIDY. I suspect there will be a second round, so I yield.

The CHAIR. Thank you.

Senator Kaine.

Senator KAINE. Thank you, Chairman. Thank you to all the witnesses. I am going to ask a question about teacher recruitment, teacher retention. I want to hear from all of you. Before I do, Chairman, I just wanted to recount something that I heard not long ago.

It has been a tough challenge for parents and teachers and school board members. I have had some school boards in Virginia,

and almost all of our school board members are parents of kids, and some are grandparents, maybe former teachers. They are deeply connected to education issues.

Many of them have kids in the system right now, and they are very poorly paid. I had a school board member in one of my jurisdictions where there has been really volatile public meetings, choose not to run again. I asked her why. And her answer stopped me absolutely dead in my tracks. She said my salary would not pay for a funeral.

She and her children have received death threats over decisions that they have been grappling with the school board members. And it has been a tough time and people are stressed, I get that. But I worry about people choosing other lines of work because of a perception that, wow, this is a job that's always been tough.

Now I got to grapple with physical security issues, whether it is a shooter in a classroom or somebody who is putting death threats on my email because of a decision that the school board might make.

Here is the question I wanted to ask. Ms. Wall talked about in her school, the school that are older son is connected, with a speech therapist leaving midyear and then one replaced at the end of the year. And as I talk to superintendents, they really sing the blues to me about teacher shortages and teacher retention, and particularly about any teacher in the special ed space.

Could each of the four of you from kind of the research standpoint, a state system, a local high school and parent, just share with the Committee what are things we ought to be thinking about in terms of attracting and retaining teachers?

Mr. GOLDHABER. I am happy to quickly weigh in, and thank you for the question, Senator Kaine. I think that we do need to be concerned generally with the desirability of the teaching profession, given everything that is going on in schools.

But I also think that it is very important not to talk about teachers generically, because what we know about the teacher labor market is that the degree of staffing challenge varies a great deal based on geography. It varies a great deal based on teacher specialization. So you mentioned special education teachers, and that is an area where I think that it is much more challenging to staff classrooms than it is to staff, for instance, elementary education classrooms.

It is tougher to staff classrooms in schools that are serving disproportionately disadvantaged or historically marginalized students. So my view, and this is perhaps not surprising as I am a labor economist, is that we ought to be focusing resources in the areas where there is more acute need.

That would be, again, the places where staffing challenges are more extreme. I do think that additional pay and retention incentives do make a difference in terms of the likelihood that we are going to attract people——

Senator KAINE. Excellent. Could I ask Commissioner Russell-Tucker? I just I would love to hear from everybody before my time expires.

Commissioner Russell-Tucker.

Ms. RUSSELL-TUCKER. Thank you, Senator. Certainly it was an area of extreme focus for us, as you can well imagine, with schools open, trying to address the staffing needs, helping a district address the staffing needs.

Some of the things we have done with our state board that we have looked at flexibilities around certifications and I think those are the things we continue—we need to continue to look at and long term—so there is a short term, but long term, how do we continue to encourage folks to come into the profession, which is so important.

That is the work that we have to continue to do together and not without hearing from the teachers themselves. What is those things that make the environment much more attractive to come into, starting with students as well?

Senator KAINE. Mr. Russell, what are those things that make the environment more attractive? So you are well positioned to answer that question.

Mr. RUSSELL. Yes, thank you so much. Number 1, the value placed upon teachers has been lost, that respect. Once upon a time, teachers used to be the pillar of a community. Now that is no longer there. The respect of teachers in regards to their expertise is not taken—is taken for granted.

Therefore, there is many things that we can do in order to increase. Number 1, as I mentioned in my testimony earlier, is pay. We have to be compensated. It is not an attractive profession because of that. I think No. 2, as I said earlier, that teachers must be a voice in regards to policies and legislation.

Senator KAINE. Chair, could I ask if Ms. Wall could respond briefly?

The CHAIR. Yes. Absolutely.

Ms. WALL. Thank you, Senator. I spoke to a lot of Carter's special education teachers leading up to today. Sadly, two of them are leaving Carter's school. I think it is because, as Mr. Russell touched on, pay is obviously a huge concern of theirs. And also they are just stretched too thin.

I mean, special education teachers have to educate the children, but yet they also have to handle the case management, which is a lot of paperwork and meetings, and that eats up a lot of their time. And they are not able to work with the children, which is their passion.

That should be the Number 1 thing that they are working on is the children and their education and there is just not enough time for them to be able to do that.

Senator KAINE. Great. Thank you so much.

Thanks, Chair Murray.

The CHAIR. Thank you.

Senator Tuberville.

Senator TUBERVILLE. Thank you, Madam Chair. Thank you for being here today. That was excellent questioning there. Senator Kaine, I have spent 40 years teaching and coaching and you hit it

right on the head, respect, environment, and pay. Mostly women are teachers, a high percentage of them.

I think all three of those should be accountable if we are going to get our education back to where it should be. So thank you all for being here today. Mr. Russell, Congress appropriated three waves of Federal K-through–12 pandemic relief funding.

In the third wave of funding that came with the passage of the American Rescue Plan in March 2021, Congress required school districts to set aside 20 percent of the funds to address student learning loss through evidence based interventions. What evidence based interventions would you prioritize if you were running your school district? What would you do with that 20 percent?

Mr. RUSSELL. Thank you so much, Senator. Thank you so much, Senator, for that question. There is a couple of things I would do. I think, Number 1, I would have a more robust inclusion program with our students, making sure that all of our students are able to be included within the curriculum.

What I mean by that is making sure that teachers are equipped to teach all of our students, making sure that students receive that quality of education that they deserve. I think Number 2, as we have done at Oberlin High School, is that we hire specialists, and we hire instructional coaches to really focus on students who are struggling and also to really focus on teacher instructional pedagogy. So those are the two things I will really focus on.

Senator TUBERVILLE. Anybody else got anything I want to add to that?

Ms. RUSSELL-TUCKER. Just a point on that. Not all our schools are resourced similarly. And so within our districts we have districts that received $40,000 and districts that received $200 million. What you can do between there is really very different. So allowing districts to assess their need and determine what they—what needs to occur for them locally, I think is really important.

Senator TUBERVILLE. Thank you. Anybody else? All right. Ms. Wall, extensive research has shown that students achieve more in school when their parents are involved in their education. I think we will all agree with that. And as a former educator and coach, I couldn't agree more. I have seen it firsthand.

Children are empowered to reach new heights when their parents or guardians are engaged. In your testimony, you highlighted that as the parent of a child with learning disability, you supplemented your son's virtual learning with a tutor who provided in-person instruction.

While not every parent is fortunate enough to do that, your decisive action ensured your son would not fall further behind the classroom, which I have seen that time and time again. In your opinion, what are the primary barriers to parent involvement in school programs? What do you think keeps parents out of involvement now?

Ms. WALL. Thank you, Senator, for your question. I think one of the struggles with the virtual learning was just the time of day. I mean, it took place in the middle of the school day.

Parents were at work, and they weren't able to sit there with their children at home and be a part of their school day. I think that is the biggest issue.

I think that is why it is important for teachers to work with the parents to help identify what those learning gaps may be so then the parents can be more involved with their children, whether that is at the end of the school day helping them with their homework or providing tutoring services, whatever that may be, but just finding the right time so that parents can be involved in that educational process with their kids.

Senator TUBERVILLE. Thank you. Mr. Russell-Tucker, recent data indicates that charter schools experienced undeniable success despite COVID–19 pandemic. In fact, nearly every state saw charter school enrollment increase in 2019 school year to 2021.

In Alabama, there was a 65 percent increase in charter school enrollment and a 1.4 decrease in public school enrollment. In your State of Connecticut, charter schools saw a 1.2 percent increase in enrollment and a nearly 3 percent decrease in district public school enrollment.

Without charter schools, overall public school enrollment declines might have been far worse, leading to further learning losses. Why do you think charter schools experienced record growth during the pandemic?

Ms. RUSSELL-TUCKER. You know, in some cases, Senator, I believe families were looking for smaller learning environments. And so that was something that they might have gravitated to. I know in Connecticut, we have worked across the board for families to be able to have the ability to make decisions around what they needed to do for learning.

But also critically important that our schools are all sharing specific information with families so they can make decisions to the point sometimes of having families walk through a building to have a sense of health and safety that is in that building. And so it is really—what is important is to make sure that all our families were able to make those decisions based on the school types that they were a part of.

Senator TUBERVILLE. Thank you.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

The CHAIR. Senator Smith.

Senator SMITH. Thank you, Madam Chair, Ranking Member. And thanks, welcome to our panelists. I really appreciate this discussion today. I want to focus in on mental health and the importance, the value of providing good mental health services in schools.

This is something that I have heard consistently from parents and students and also educators in Minnesota even before the pandemic. But of course, the pandemic really exacerbated that challenge. In Minnesota, I am sure like a lot of districts, we really struggle with finding resources in order to provide this.

Minnesota actually has one of the worst school counselor to student ratios in the country. The recommended ratio is 1 to 250 students. In Minnesota, it is 1 for every 654 students. And it is even

worse for social workers and mental health providers, psychologists, and so forth. So one of the things that has happened in Minnesota is that ARP funding has been deployed to address this challenge.

In Albert Lea, Minnesota, they are hiring counselors and a social worker. In Dover, Iowa, they are bringing in outside mental health professionals to try to fill this gap. Mr. Russell, and then I am going to turn to you, Ms. Russell-Tucker, as an educator, could you talk to us about the value, what you see around having mental health professionals in schools to be able to provide the—fill that need for students and what difference it makes in the work that you are doing?

Mr. RUSSELL. Thank you so much, Senator, for that question. There is a great need for that. In my testimony, I mentioned for the first time in my 25 years of teaching, we had a social worker. And what I noticed is the emotional and mental growth of our students were substantial.

Our social worker brought in new ways of trying to encourage our students. Our social worker was able to really tap into not only students trauma, but also faculty trauma as well. And from there, it seemed as though there is a healing process that is taking place. And so therefore, there is a great need, even in my teaching, in my classroom, what I noticed is students are more emotional, well, because of the social worker that we brought in, and students are more able to really focus on the lesson right at the moment.

Senator SMITH. That allows—it is sort of the link. Of course, it is just one student. It is not like, oh, here is my emotional wellness health and here is my academic wellness self. It is one person.

Everybody, everything that I have read has talked about the sort of how there is also delay, social emotional development growth, just as there has been academic delay in academic growth because of the pandemic. And it sounds like that's what you are seeing as well.

Mr. RUSSELL. Yes, I am.

Senator SMITH. Ms. Russell, would you like to comment on this from your perspective and what you are seeing as far as the importance of addressing mental health care needs for students in their learning environment?

Ms. RUSSELL-TUCKER. Thank you, Senator. And that is a passion of mine. Even before the pandemic, we recognized that students had to have their social emotional well-being addressed because that is foundational to learning.

We made that investment priority with the ESSER funds that came in, again, not for just ourselves. And we also realize in Connecticut, so all our districts, as I have said, have invested over $183 million across the state.

We are also doing it from our state reserve as well. But our legislature just passed landmark legislation on mental health that is also providing additional resources for schools to be able to hire mental health staff and others that they need. Assess what they need at the local level.

It is critical for students to be—to learn, and it is also critical for staff when we talk about the environment that they are working in, that their needs are also met. But if the children, if their needs are met, then they can also focus on teaching and learning.

Senator SMITH. Thank you. I couldn't agree more. I think this is an area of very important focus for us. I want to just note that not only has this Committee has just done—is in the midst of doing really important work.

I am marking up and working on a mental health—broader based mental health legislation. But I am in the package that we just voted on for last night. We are also looking as we look at gun safety issues, also looking at mental health issues and what we can do to support that. I think that is a very important priority.

Maybe just quickly, Mr. Russell, before I run out of time here. I also believe that strong after school programs are incredibly valuable to help to support students and kids. We are seeing how Rescue Plan dollars were used to extend afterschool programs.

My colleague on this Committee, Senator Murphy, has worked a lot on this and I have been glad to partner with him. Could you just have a minute to talk a little bit about how those afterschool programs also can be helpful to advancing kid's social, emotional, and academic growth?

Mr. RUSSELL. Thank you so much again, Senator, for that question. Yes, it has been a great, great benefit to our school district. Because of the ESSER fund, we were able to create and to enhance our afterschool enrichment program. Our program goes from afterschool to around 6.00 in the p.m., maybe 3 hours per day.

What we bring in are tutors, but at the same time we bring in recreational activities just in order for our kids to be kids. And what I noticed is that after school program has really benefited our school. As I said earlier, in regards to bring in the social worker, the after school program has been a direct link into our emotional well-being of our students as well.

Senator SMITH. Thank you very much.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

The CHAIR. Senator Casey.

Senator CASEY. Chair Murray, thanks very much. And thanks for having this hearing. Both, thank you and the Ranking Member. I wanted to start with an issue which I don't think anyone here or anyone listening would contest, and that is that the pandemic has had a devastating impact on students across the board.

There is just no way to calculate that or adequately describe it. That devastating impact on children in our schools is often worse if that child has a disability. And obviously, all of you are critically concerned about these issues that relate to children in our schools generally, but in particular with regard to the terrible impact of the pandemic.

I wanted to start with Commissioner Russell-Tucker to ask you about that focus on children with disabilities, and in particular children with disabilities in our schools who may not have access, have had access, I should say, to all of their individual education plan services.

We know the American Rescue Plan provided dollars to support reopening schools and about $130 billion, as I recall, and dollars to address the academic challenges students face.

It also included additional funding to support students through the ADA, through those grants. What do you think we need to do, Commissioner to support the academic renewal of students with disabilities to ensure that they can achieve their academic potential?

Ms. RUSSELL-TUCKER. Thank you, Senator, for that question. And as I laid out in the testimony, in addition to the IDA funds and the additional resources which we are grateful for, that we also tapped into the states Reserve funds to even add to that because this is so critically important for us to do.

We need to listen and hear from families what they are experiencing so we can provide specific supports. We need to hear directly from our school districts about what their challenges are as well so we can be again supporting them in all their needs.

Connecticut has 80,000 or so of our students who are students with disabilities. And back to your previous question about 11,000 of them with dyslexia.

It is really important for us to be able to lean in on our families and hear directly from families what their experiences are and how to support the children. Also from my children, their voices matter as well as we are doing this work.

Senator CASEY. Could you also expand on the question of how states are using those rescue plan dollars to support students with disabilities, either through the lens of the State of Connecticut or more broadly?

Ms. RUSSELL-TUCKER. Thank you again. We see in Connecticut that districts are using it for supplemental tutoring and reading instruction. We have also provide individualized in-home supports by organizations that are able to do that.

Certainly doing more special education evaluations and ensuring that IEP are indeed implemented as we know that there were disruptions to that. So working very closely with our districts.

Those are the things that are emerging. And we are looking to also share those as best practices across the system as well.

Senator CASEY. Commissioner, thank you. I another question for you as well. I don't think anyone would contest as well that the pandemic was the ultimate emergency, on so many fronts and so many facets of our lives, and in particular for schools and for students and for educators.

I have a piece of legislation called Prep for All Students Act, which would make sure that the voices of students and families, students with disabilities and their families are included in school emergency planning.

You have engaged in extensive efforts to get that kind of stakeholder feedback, including parents and students, on how to prioritize the use of elementary and secondary schools' emergency relief funds.

How would, including the voice of students with disabilities and their families, help to improve both the quality of emergency or preparedness planning, as well as the effectiveness of that planning?

Ms. RUSSELL-TUCKER. Senator, I always say it cannot be about them without them. And so it is so critically important that they are at the table. And this is what we have championed in our state here and from our families. A student with disabilities engage in, frankly, even with their attorneys that are supporting families.

We know exactly what the issues are. So their voice are critically important it is not an afterthought. It must be a part of the dialog and conversation. We have got to hear that perspective so that we can craft policies that are not in search of a solution—in search of a problem, but actually addressing a problem that does exist and it is a real solution with intended results.

Senator CASEY. Thank you, Commissioner.

Thanks, Chairman Murray.

The CHAIR. Senator Rosen.

Senator ROSEN. Oh, excuse me. Thanks. It is on. Thank you, Chair Murray. And thank you, Ranking Member Cassidy. I really want to thank the witnesses here today for your thoughtfulness and your caring on behalf of the children, the families, everybody who works in the school and the community, really appreciate that.

I want to build a little bit on what Senator Smith was talking about and student mental health, because we are in the midst of a youth mental health crisis. It has only been made worse by worse by the pandemic.

We know how hard distance learning was for everyone, particularly difficult for students with mental health challenges. They lost access to their friends, to their teachers, and to, if they were available, any in-school mental health resources they may have previously relied on for support.

Tragically, in Nevada's Clark County School District, the number of students who died by suicide in 2020 more than doubled from the year before, tragically. And so we have to do more to help.

Along with Senator Cassidy, we are working on bipartisan legislation that would reauthorize and enhance a Federal program to train teachers, school staff, and other personnel to better recognize the symptoms of youth mental illness or mental health issues before they escalate, referring students and their family members to appropriate community based mental health services.

I have also introduced bipartisan legislation with Senator Murkowski to expand SAM grants for comprehensive student mental health promotion and suicide prevention to K–12 school districts, as money is currently only available to colleges and universities. I just wanted to build on that.

You have answered my questions already. So the next thing I want to move to is the learning loss. We had a lot of learning loss. It highlighted our educational inequities facing our students in low income rural communities, as Senator Casey mentions, our student students with disabilities.

We have to focus on eliminating that educational deficit as quickly as possible. I know in Nevada, across the country, educators are working to move forward and overcome many of those setbacks.

Dr. Goldhaber, as we prepare for the next school year this fall, how do we bridge the gap for those students who face the most inequities and challenges, particularly our low income minority or rural students? And as Senator Casey highlighted, you have responded to our disability community.

Mr. GOLDHABER. Well, again, I think that one of the things that is really important is that we do a good job of figuring out which students really need which kinds of help and tailoring the interventions to really target those students and target the kinds of help that they that they need.

I think that the school systems, at least that we are working with, we are seeing that kind of targeting in a lot of the kinds of investments that one would expect and hope for. Again, tutoring programs, extra support in core academic subjects and summer school.

But I guess I want to take this moment to just sort of emphasize something that was said earlier, which is that systems received very different amounts of money. And there are some estimates out there about whether it is going to be enough. And my take is that it is going to be enough.

The ESSER funds are going to be sufficient to help students in lots of school systems, but not all school systems. I think that we need to look at this as not a short run.

We are going to get over the hump in a year, but in some cases a longer term endeavor and make sure that we are keeping our eye on the ball of student achievement when hopefully the pandemic has faded in the rearview mirror, but that it may not have fully faded in terms of learning loss for some students.

That in the out years, we are continuing to provide support for those students that really need it.

Senator ROSEN. Well, thank you. I want to build on that in the short time we have left, because we can't do all of this without addressing the teacher shortage, especially in specialized subject areas such as career and technical education in Nevada. We are hearing that we have about 1,500 CTE educator positions currently unfilled due to insufficient resources.

Again, Dr. Goldhaber, what does the initial data tell us regarding which subjects are most at risk in terms of teacher recruitment and retention? And we can buildup mental health services and other wraparound services, but we need educators in the classroom. So what do you think we need to do to help thee?

Mr. GOLDHABER. I think that just very quickly, there are three—four areas. So you mentioned CTE, special education, STEM areas, and ELL areas where the staffing challenge seems much more acute relative to teachers at the elementary education level. And what is important is that it is acute for different reasons.

In the case of special education, there is higher than average attrition of special education teachers. But for instance, in the case

of STEM teachers, it looks like there is an issue with the number of people who are being trained and entering the workforce.

I guess I would just sort of push us toward tailored solutions that really get at the nature of the problem. And ultimately, I think that we need to have a school system send stronger signals to the teacher labor market and prospective teachers about the areas where there are real shortages and challenges in getting classrooms staffed.

Senator ROSEN. Thank you, Madam Chair.

The CHAIR. Senator Cassidy.

Senator CASSIDY. Thank you again, Madam Chair. You know, in my opening remarks, I mentioned how unions and politicians enabling the unions have really done a disservice to our students. I mention that because as a physician I know that brain development intertwines or, if you will, interacts with the instruction a child receives.

If a child misses out a year of education, when her brain is at that critical point of development, it may not be recoverable. That is what we have to acknowledge. And at the outset, in the Chair's testimony, she had mentioned some differences between the two parties. I will mention those as well.

In these packages that we passed to give financial aid to the school, it was a battle for Republicans to get resources for parochial and private schools. And once we allocated it, some Democratic Governors refused to give it. It was incredibly frustrating, but that probably points to a difference in perspective from this.

From the Republican standpoint, we take it from the perspective of the student and her or his family, not from the teachers—or excuse me, not from the school itself.

That is distinctly a different perspective because, Ms. Wall, you spoke about taking your children into the private setting and you implied, you were very delicate, that they cost you a fair amount of money, but your family could afford. There are a lot of families out there who cannot afford. Any comment on that, Ms. Wall?

Ms. WALL. Thank you, Senator. We had every intention to send all three of our children to public school. I went to public school. My husband went to public school. However, when it was clear the public school was not going to provide in-person instruction for our children, we chose to send our middle son to private school.

Now, had they had in-person instruction, he would have been at public school. So we made that decision for him because we knew it was best for him and he had more or less a normal year. And we were grateful that. But as you mentioned, most families——

Senator CASSIDY. Stop for a second. He had essentially a normal year.

Ms. WALL. Yes.

Senator CASSIDY. You are about to say most families could not afford such an arrangement.

Ms. WALL. Correct.

Senator CASSIDY. I suspect if you had to send all three, it would have been difficult for your family.

Ms. WALL. Yes.

Senator CASSIDY. Mr. Goldhaber—Dr. Goldhaber, I am sorry.

Mr. GOLDHABER. Thank you, Senator Cassidy. I guess I just wanted to strike a little bit of an optimistic note, because I actually think that recovery is possible——

Senator CASSIDY. Can I stop you in that because I need to develop another point? In your data, did you differentiate between students who attended a public school and students who attended an alternative setting?

Mr. GOLDHABER. These were all students that were in public schools.

Senator CASSIDY. What about those who are in charter versus those who are in traditional public?

Mr. GOLDHABER. We did not separately analyze. We were looking at data from test scores administered by NWA and we didn't separately look at students that were in charter schools.

Senator CASSIDY. Sounds good, or I understand that. Let me put it that way. Let me make the point that I do know that there were religious schools and private schools and charter schools that made the decision to remain open and, or to open earlier and, or to put in these enriched possibilities.

But not—well public schools were closed. Now what we have heard today, we don't need Dr. Goldhaber to have analyzed that, because what we have heard today is that the determinant variable in how students did was whether or not the school was open from the point of view of the teacher and from the point of view of statistical analysis.

Really, our focus should be how do we give the parent the right to choose the school where her child can get the best instruction for that child no matter the moment? If one school is shut down, then another school would be open, and the parent should have that choice.

We have also heard that there can be financial barriers in order to achieve that option. I have introduced legislation that would allow, encourage the ability for a family of limited means to still be able to attend the school that is best for their child because another school might be closed or for other reasons.

I hope that in the future both parties, it can be bipartisan, that we take the perspective of the student and her family as opposed to the school itself, agnostic as the school, so that the school—so that the child will actually have the greatest opportunity for herself or himself. I thank you all for being here. I yield.

The CHAIR. Thank you. Commissioner Russell-Tucker, I wanted to ask you, given the very real threat of the fall surge and emergence of new variants, we need to be supporting our schools right now as they prepare for back to school in a few short months and more disruption for students and families just cannot be an option.

That is really why I am so focused on passing supplemental COVID funding to make sure you have tests, vaccines, treatments so that schools and districts and parents are prepared for whatever comes next in this pandemic. I also want to make sure that HHS,

the Department of Education, are giving very clear direction to our states and school districts so they are preparing now for fall and winter.

Congress, by the way, also needs to pass an extension of the school meal waiver to help make sure our schools are feeding our kids. But. Commissioner Russell-Tucker, can you lay out what steps you in Connecticut are taking to make sure schools and school districts are ready for the fall and winter, especially if we face another surge?

Mr. GOLDHABER. Thank you, Senator. In my testimony, you have heard me talk about our Health and Safety Tuesdays in the collaboration with our communities. The last meeting we had with this team, we asked them, so we asked everyone that was on that call, please tell us what it is that you need for this coming for the fall. We are meeting in a few weeks.

We are having our own summit with Public Health and the Department of Education to start thinking about what are those things that we need for support—with our history, what we have learned in the past to where we need to go. The resources you have talked about, making test available, all of that was a part of our package that we were using to support and that we are looking forward to.

But it really is going to be important for us to think about, if there is a new variant, what do we do to make sure that learning is not as interrupted or disrupted as it was in the past, because of what we have learned and that we are pivoting to based on that.

All of the supports from the Federal Government is certainly important as we go back to our states and continue to think about planning for this upcoming fall based on lessons learned.

The CHAIR. Thank you very much. Thank you to all of our witnesses today. That will end our hearing.

I want to thank all of our colleagues. I want to thank Dr. Goldhaber, Commissioner Russell-Tucker, Mr. Russell, Ms. Wall, for a really thoughtful conversation about the challenges that our students are facing from this pandemic and what we can do to help them recover and to thrive after such a few very hard years.

For any Senators who wish to ask additional questions, questions for the record will be due in 10 business days, July 7th at 5.00 p.m.

With that, the Committee stands adjourned.

[Whereupon, at 11:36 a.m., the hearing was adjourned.]

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