
EDUCATION & LABOR COMMITTEE

Congressman George Miller, Chairman

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**Chairman Miller Statement at Committee Hearing On
“Strengthening America’s Competitiveness through Common
Academic Standards”**

WASHINGTON, D.C. – *Below are the prepared remarks of U.S. Rep. George Miller (D-CA), chairman of the House Education and Labor Committee, for a committee hearing on “Strengthening America’s Competitiveness through Common Academic Standards.”*

Today our Committee will examine the great momentum that is building for improving our schools and our competitiveness through internationally-benchmarked common academic standards.

Our nation faces unprecedented challenges that threaten our competitiveness. We face an achievement gap within our schools but we also face an achievement gap between the U.S. and other countries whose educational outcomes are surging while ours are stagnating.

President Obama and Secretary Duncan recognize that our economy’s fate is directly linked to addressing both achievement gaps.

They know we won’t be able to build the world-class education system our economy needs and our children deserve unless all students are taught to rigorous standards that prepare them for college and good jobs.

We all know the statistics – we’ve fallen to 21st in math achievement, 25th in science, and 24th in problem solving. We used to be number one in college completion. Now we are 18th.

We used to produce the most PhD candidates in the world. Now, not one but, two Chinese universities have overtaken us.

Our 15 year-olds rank a full year behind their peers in higher-performing countries in math. Even our best math students rank behind 22 other countries.

We must reverse this trend. I’m pleased to finally see major momentum behind the effort for common state standards. There is a shared recognition that the patchwork of

standards in place today is holding us back not lifting us up. And it's students, and ultimately our economy, that will pay the price.

So far, a core of forward-thinking states has been leading the way toward stronger, common standards.

I want to commend the Alliance for Excellent Education, the National Governor's Association, the Council of Chief State School Officers and all of their partners in this effort for their leadership. They deserve great credit for how they've already helped move the needle.

Let me be clear: I want this committee, and the Congress, to do whatever we can to support this state-led, bipartisan effort. That's why we're here today – to learn more about this work and to hear from you all about how the federal government can best support it.

We forged a good start by making historic investments in education in the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act.

We created an unprecedented, \$5 billion Race to the Top fund that will allow Secretary Duncan to encourage states to innovate. This includes improving standards and assessments so they are aligned with career and college-readiness.

This fund will lay the foundation for the significant changes we'll need to make to truly improve our schools, make sure students graduate with the skills they need, and cultivate a workforce that can compete globally.

For years we've talked about how to close the achievement gap among students domestically. But that isn't enough. We've got to focus on closing the international achievement gap too.

The goal of the No Child Left Behind Act is to make sure every child receives an excellent public education based on high standards.

While some states have done a good job insisting on higher standards, others have set the bar far too low.

The quality of a child's education shouldn't be left to the luck of the draw.

One of the most important things we can do to fulfill the law's promise is to develop internationally-benchmarked standards that will prepare all students for the rigors of a college or a career.

There is already a great deal of consensus among high performing nations about what our students need to know to succeed. In the highest performing countries, standards cover a smaller number of topics in much greater depth.

In the U.S., state standards typically cover a larger number of topics in each grade level. Schools end up with a curriculum that, as they say, is “a mile wide and inch deep.”

This means teachers can’t teach it, students can’t learn it, and parents can’t reinforce it.

As NAEP shows us year after year, the unintended consequences of a system that varies vastly from state to state is rather than striving for excellence, states are camouflaging poor performance.

The result is a generation of students without the complex skills and knowledge needed to succeed in the jobs of the future.

This is why we’ve brought you all here today. We’ll hear from witnesses about the state-led effort underway to develop a common core of fewer, clearer and higher standards.

This hearing will focus on what we need to do to raise our standards so that students in every state, from Mississippi to California to Tennessee, have access to a world-class education system that launches the next great era of American competitiveness.

I look forward to hearing from the witnesses.

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