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Budget and Appropriations

Last week, lawmakers focused on issues outside of the annual appropriations process and sweeping competitiveness legislation. The House addressed gun violence via an Oversight and Reform Committee hearing on the need to address what the panel called “the gun violence epidemic” and passage of measures that would bar sales of semiautomatic weapons to people under 21 and ban large-capacity magazines. In the Senate, nine bipartisan senators are working to develop a package that could pass that chamber. Those negotiations will continue this week. There were some appropriations developments. An FY 2023 deeming resolution was included in a vote on a rule on Wednesday. The resolution sets FY 2023 discretionary spending at \$1.6 trillion. The vote to adopt the combined rule was 218-205, with all Republicans opposed.

For the remainder of June, House appropriators will focus on marking up FY 2023 spending bills. According to the announced schedule, the Labor, Health and Human Services and Education spending bill will get subcommittee consideration on June 23. Full committee action will follow on June 30. Given the schedule and the House calendar, the chamber will not be able to approve all FY 2023 spending bills by the July 4 recess — a goal set by Appropriations Committee Chairwoman Rosa DeLauro (D-CT) earlier this year. The Senate has yet to signal its plans for developing and approving FY 2023 spending bills.

The shift in effort and focus has also affected progress on competitiveness legislation. Staff and stakeholders had been talking about a July 4 deadline for resolving differences between the House- and Senate-passed bills. That goal seems all but impossible now. Advocates continue to weigh in with staff and lawmakers about the importance of the bill’s lower-profile STEM education and equity provisions, arguing that a final package must include them amid fears that lawmakers will resort to passing a bill that is narrower in scope than either of the approved packages.

Lawmakers, staff and advocates will certainly be busy for the remainder of the month.

BIPARTISAN POLICY CENTER TALKS PATH FORWARD ON STUDENT DEBT

On Monday, June 6, the Bipartisan Policy Center (BPC) hosted a virtual event titled, “Path Forward on Student Debt” with Under Secretary of Education James Kvaal. Other participants included Kat Welbeck, director of advocacy and civil rights counsel for the Student Borrower Protection Center; Lanae Erickson, senior vice president of social policy, education and politics at Third Way; Danielle Douglas, reporter for

the *Washington Post*; and Justin Draeger, executive director of the National Association of Student Financial Aid Administrators (NASFAA). Douglas opened the conversation with Kvaal, asking him about the timeline and details of the administration's debt forgiveness plan. Kvaal responded that policy specifics on debt cancellation are still under review, but he hoped that any discussion on debt forgiveness would be coupled with broader, permanent reforms to higher education policy. Kvaal detailed the administration's higher education accomplishments to date: increased Pell grants, funding for minority serving institutions, administrative reforms to ease access to federal student loan benefits, proposals to promote free community college, as well as efforts to address poor employment outcomes within higher education. When discussing student debt, the under secretary said, "There are a lot of players involved: states have been disinvesting for decades, colleges raise tuition and Pell grants are flat, and all of that comes out in the student loan program, where we have more and more students borrowing, and they are borrowing more amounts." The conversation with Kvaal was followed by an expert panel discussion, moderated by BPC's Kevin Miller. Welbeck underscored the intersectional equity considerations of student loan debt, specifically the racial wealth gap and gender pay gap. Draeger noted that the administration has provided student loan relief with a targeted set of reforms and warned against being in "the same spot" 10 years from now, while Erickson added that reforms should include restricting student loan access to institutions that leave student borrowers economically "below the poverty line." An archived video of the webinar can be found [here](#).

SENATE APPROPRIATIONS SUBCOMMITTEE EXAMINES FY23 ED BUDGET

On Tuesday, June 7, the Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human Services, Education, and Related Agencies (LHHS-ED) held a hearing on President Joe Biden's fiscal year 2023 budget request for the Department of Education (ED). The relatively short hearing, which featured Secretary of Education Miguel Cardona, touched on school safety issues following the tragic shooting at Robb Elementary and examined student loan debt and forgiveness; mental health supports; supports for afterschool and summer learning; career and technical education and career pathways; and regulations around charter schools and school choice. Chairwoman Patty Murray (D-WA) and Ranking Member Roy Blunt (R-MO) each acknowledged the tragedy of lives lost at Robb Elementary in their opening statements, and in his testimony, Secretary Cardona named aloud each of the murdered 19 students and two teachers. "We must say their names as we remember the responsibility that we have," said Cardona. Several senators drew attention to mental health challenges, federal funding for supports and treatments, and ED's plan to address the mental health crisis. "ESSER funds have created a 65% increase in social workers and a 17% increase in counselors, but after conversations around the country with stakeholders, we've determined that it's not enough, and more is needed," stated Cardona in response to a question from Senator Blunt. Cardona also added that mental health supports should "include access to afterschool programming... that gives students more opportunities to engage with their peers in a positive social environment." In response to a similar question from Senator Jeanne Shaheen (D-NH), Cardona said, "We have an opportunity to really reimagine how we provide support for students. The school social workers or the community social workers are obviously a major support," but additional funding and supports should be generated for afterschool programs, summer programs, and good mentors, he added. Cardona also stood firm in his views on "money following the child." In response to a question from Senator Mike Braun (R-IN) on this matter, asking if more resources should directly support students, rather than funding the schools that serve them, Cardona disagreed, stating that the

government should not be in the business of “producing a public school system of winners and losers - all schools should have a high-quality education,” and all public schools should be adequately funded, he argued. The archived video of the hearing and witness testimony can be found [here](#).

RAND CORP DISCUSSES HIGH-QUALITY TEACHER INSTRUCTIONAL MATERIALS

On Thursday, June 9, The RAND Corporation held a virtual discussion titled, "Creating Conditions for Teachers' Use of High-Quality Instructional Materials." Participants included Kathy Kelly, director of curriculum, instruction and professional development at the Delaware Department of Education; Sy Doan, an associate policy researcher at RAND; Tenette Smith, executive director of the Mississippi Department of Education's Office of Elementary Education and Reading; and Julia Kaufman, a senior policy researcher at RAND. The event highlighted recommendations from a recent RAND [report](#) on findings from RAND's [2021 American Instructional Resources Survey Project](#). The new report discusses key policy strategies undertaken by a network of states (the High-Quality Instructional Materials [HQIM] Professional Development [IMPD] Network); focuses on strategies to improve the uptake and use of standards-aligned instructional materials for K-12; and shares findings on standards-aligned curriculum material adoption, use, buy-in and supports across the U.S. and among states in the IMPD Network. During the discussion, report authors Doan and Kaufman presented these findings, which indicate that state participation in the IMPD Network was closely related to higher rates of adoption and use of standards-aligned materials and that the relationship between curriculum-specific professional learning and usage of standards-aligned materials was much stronger in districts where standards-aligned materials were already required or recommended. Both Smith and Kelly spoke to particular strategies in Mississippi and Delaware that have increased adoption and supports for high-quality materials. “We began working with [Teaching Lab](#) to train ELA and Mathematics content leaders so that we had experts that could go back into districts and charters to provide support they needed,” along with guidance documents and supports from the Delaware Education Department that included HQIMs as a core tenant,” Kelly explained. Smith elaborated on the most impactful supports for HQIMs in Mississippi, saying, “We attribute a lot of our successes to our coaching strategies that we implement within the state.” She noted that Mississippi has invested millions of dollars into providing literacy support coaches to districts across the state that are well-versed in all HQIMs and added that the state has recently implemented math coaching strategies.

CARDONA LAYS OUT VISION TO SUPPORT AND ELEVATE TEACHING PROFESSION

On Thursday, June 9, Secretary of Education Miguel Cardona laid out the administration's approach to supporting teachers across the country and promoting the teaching profession. During an address and fireside chat at the Bank Street College of New York, Cardona discussed how the Department of Education (ED), states, districts and higher education institutions can recruit, prepare and retain talented teachers in order to improve the nation's education system. The secretary highlighted the work ED has done to support teachers since the start of the Biden-Harris administration and shared his own experience and perspective as a former teacher, principal and school administrator. In addition to Cardona's visit, the department released a [fact sheet](#) highlighting five strategies outlining how American Rescue Plan (ARP) investments in educators can be sustained for the long term using other existing sources of federal funds. Those five strategies include: investing in a strong and diverse teacher pipeline;

supporting teachers in earning initial or additional certification in high-demand areas; helping teachers pay off their student loans; supporting teachers by providing them and students with the resources they need to succeed; and creating opportunities for teacher advancement and leadership. To view Secretary Cardona's remarks, click [here](#).