



# THE IMPACT:

**FIGHTING FOR PUBLIC EDUCATION**



*Students engage in a science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) lab at the NeoCity School in Orlando, FL.*

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*Secretary Cardona kicks off the U.S. Department of Education's 2024 Back-to-School bus tour.*

## MESSAGE FROM THE SECRETARY



Public education is our nation's greatest springboard to the American dream, and it's worth fighting for. From astronauts to artists to innovators in every field, nearly every great American success story starts in a public school, with a teacher who saw potential in a student and worked to nurture it. Yet, our nation

has long struggled to provide all students—including students of color, English learners, rural students, students with disabilities, and students from low-income backgrounds—with equal access to a high-quality public education and clear pathways to college and careers. And too often, recent culture wars have sowed division and undermined the political will needed to boldly invest in educational opportunity for all.

It was against this backdrop of normalized inequities and complacency in education that a once-in-a-century pandemic plunged our schools into crisis, and President Biden and Vice President Harris asked me—a lifelong educator and believer in the potential of every student—to serve as Secretary of Education.

When my team and I arrived at the U.S. Department of Education, staggering challenges awaited us.

The pandemic had disrupted students' learning, and more than half of the nation's schools were still closed for in-person instruction. A mounting teacher shortage had escalated into an urgent crisis that threatened academic recovery. Students struggled with mental health amid social isolation, the loss of parents and caregivers, and the continued threat of gun violence in their communities. Meanwhile, pandemic-era financial hardships left millions of college students on the brink of dropping out with debt and no degrees, and institutions grappled with plummeting enrollments. Additionally, a broken student loan system continued to deny relief to eligible borrowers and hold colleges accountable for unaffordable debt.

In the face of these extraordinary challenges, President Biden responded with the boldest

investments in education witnessed in generations, including the American Rescue Plan and the Bipartisan Safer Communities Act, among other historic funding increases.

At the U.S. Department of Education, we leveraged these historic investments not just to reopen schools and kickstart recovery, but to defend public education and deliver real results for America's students. Doing so demanded that we reject convention and resist Washington's time-old temptation to institute top-down mandates or sell our schools shiny, one-size-fits-all solutions. Instead, the Biden-Harris team's work at the Department would be guided by a simple premise: We can raise the bar for America's students if we embrace what we know works in education.

And crisis by crisis, that's exactly what we did.

As a result, today, student achievement is rising, and chronic absenteeism is falling. More teachers, nurses, and mental health professionals are working in public education than before the pandemic; and, for the first time, aspiring educators in nearly every state have access to earn-as-you-learn apprenticeships. Record investments in Title I schools and our nation's most inclusive colleges are supporting students' success. More students from low-income backgrounds have access to Pell Grants for college than ever before. Nearly five million Americans are receiving student loan forgiveness, and tough new safeguards are protecting students from unaffordable debt.

This report, "The Impact: Fighting for Public Education," is about more than documenting the successes under the Biden-Harris Administration. It's about demonstrating what's possible when we invest wisely in public education. If leaders at every level of government continue to embrace what works for students, we won't just continue to raise the bar in education—we will create prosperity and lead the world for generations to come.

**Miguel A. Cardona, Ed.D.**

*U.S. Secretary of Education*



*A student from Victory Elementary School in Bristow, VA works on lessons on the computer.*

## SAFELY AND QUICKLY REOPENING SCHOOLS

### > Our Impact:

When President Biden and Vice President Harris arrived in the White House, the pandemic already had plunged America's education system into crisis. Fewer than half of the nation's schools were open for in-person learning. It was clear that the widespread school closures initiated early in the pandemic resulted in lost instructional time and devastating academic setbacks for students, particularly in rural and high-poverty districts already struggling with rampant inequities. Recognizing that reopening schools was a matter of urgency not just for students, but also for their families and our economy at large, President Biden signed a Day One Executive Order making the safe return to in-person learning a government-wide priority. The U.S. Department of Education assembled handbooks for schools on safe and

healthy in-person learning and created a clearinghouse of best practices for preventing closures, improving ventilation, running vaccine clinics, and more. Following the passage of President Biden's American Rescue Plan, the Department swiftly distributed \$130 billion in funding for K-12 schools and released a Return to School Roadmap with promising strategies for meeting students' vast academic, mental health, and other needs. This effort unfolded alongside the Biden-Harris Administration's rapid deployment of vaccines, which prioritized educators beginning in March 2021 and successfully vaccinated about 90 percent of school staff in under six months. These combined efforts culminated in nearly all K-12 schools resuming in-person learning at the start of the 2021-2022 academic year.

## FROM THE FIELD:



**“Managing four children’s remote learning during COVID while working full-time was incredibly challenging. My kindergarten twins, second grader, and fourth grader struggled with the screen time and isolation.**

My older girls, who previously loved school, lost their enthusiasm for learning without the connection to teachers and friends. Their return to in-person classes at Guilford County

Schools transformed everything. My children thrived academically, rebuilt friendships, and their emotional well-being improved significantly. The return to normal school routines showed me just how essential our schools are, and I gained profound respect for educators and their dedication during this difficult period.”

— *Stephanie Deaver,*  
*Parent, Guilford County, NC*

**2020**

When the American Rescue Plan was signed into law, **only 46% of America’s P-12 schools were open for full-time, in-person learning.**



Just one year later, **over 99% of P-12 schools were open for full-time, in-person instruction.**

**2021**

*Source: The White House, Fact Sheet: How the American Rescue Plan is Keeping America’s Schools Open Safely, Combating Learning Loss, and Addressing Student Mental Health*



*U.S. Deputy Secretary of Education Cindy Marten visits Harford Heights Elementary School in Baltimore, MD.*



# ACHIEVING ACADEMIC EXCELLENCE AND ACCELERATING STUDENTS' LEARNING

## > Our Impact:

A once-in-a-generation pandemic had a once-in-a-generation impact on our nation's students. That's why the Biden-Harris Administration's efforts to safely reopen our nation's public schools and kickstart academic recovery began with a once-in-a-generation, \$130-billion investment in public education. That investment continued with historic increases for Title I schools, which serve students in communities with high rates of poverty. To help schools leverage these funds and adopt the most promising strategies for accelerating learning, the Department provided technical assistance and other resources, including a five-part series on enhancing math and literacy instruction that engaged over 1,500 leaders in the field. Today, independent research confirms that the

Department's efforts are contributing to a significant rebound in student achievement. Already, students have recovered one-third of pandemic-era learning loss in math and one-quarter in reading. Compared to typical years, students are showing twice the growth in math and five times the growth in reading. Additionally, nationwide, two-thirds of schools report decreased rates of chronic absenteeism—which equates to students missing valuable instructional time and poses serious implications for students' overall academic success and wellbeing. Furthermore, the Department established the National Partnership for Student Success and successfully engaged an estimated 323,000 tutors, mentors, academic support coaches, and volunteers to meet students' holistic needs.

## ▶ FROM THE FIELD:

**High rates of excused and unexcused absences—also known as chronic absenteeism—increased sharply in every state during the pandemic, and especially among students from low-income backgrounds and students of color. According to the Council of Economic Advisers, chronic absenteeism can account for up to 27 percent and 45 percent of academic test score declines in math and reading, respectively. That is why the**

**Biden-Harris Administration's strategy for academic recovery and learning acceleration included funding and technical assistance to help states, districts, and schools increase student attendance and engagement.** In

Connecticut, where chronic absenteeism increased by as much as 10 percentage points after the pandemic, Department funds helped launch the Learner Engagement and Attendance Program. Using evidence-based strategies to increase attendance—including home visits with students and families—Connecticut successfully reengaged 18,000 students in school during its most recent academic year.

### School Supports to Increase Student Engagement and Achievement



**WRAPAROUND SERVICES:**  
**59% of schools** offer these student and family supports



**HIGH-INTENSITY TUTORS:**  
**52% of schools** offer this student support



**MENTORS:**  
**50% of schools** offer this student support



**COLLEGE AND CAREER ADVISORS:**  
**89% of high schools** offer this student support

*Source: Results Summary of the National Partnership for Student Success' Principal Survey for the 2023-2024 academic year, as analyzed by the Johns Hopkins Everyone Graduates Center*



*Students share their experiences and discuss the supports they need for their overall wellbeing during a Youth Mental Health Town Hall with Secretary Cardona.*

# SUPPORTING STUDENTS' MENTAL HEALTH

## > Our Impact:

Confronted by a growing youth mental health crisis—exacerbated by the social isolation caused by the pandemic and other challenges, including rising rates of gun violence in communities—the Department led the Biden-Harris Administration’s efforts to transform supports for students’ mental health and overall wellbeing. Research shows that students are six times more likely to utilize mental health services if those services are offered in their schools. With this in mind, the Department invested more than \$2 billion through the Bipartisan Safer Communities Act and other federal funds to help create safer schools, strengthen school climates, and prepare and hire more than 16,000 new counselors, psychologists, social workers, and other mental health professionals to work in schools across 48 states. The Department also prioritized efforts to enhance school safety and improve school climates. These historic actions built on a more than \$1 billion investment from the

American Rescue Plan aimed at meeting students’ behavioral and mental health needs. And through President Biden’s five-fold increase in funding for the Full-Service Community Schools grant program, the Department provided funding for the creation of 2,000 new community schools across the nation, providing an additional 1 million students with access to comprehensive academic, social, and health supports, such as nutrition and mental health services, early childhood education, and out-of-school-time programs. The Department also partnered with the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services to improve access to school-based health services covered by Medicaid in 24 states—compared to only 7 states with expanded access to Medicaid in 2020. In those states working to expand Medicaid coverage in schools, an estimated 9 million children and youth now have better access to mental health services.

## FROM THE FIELD:

**As a result of increased state investments in students’ mental health and expanded access to Medicaid funding for school-based services, Michigan increased the number of behavioral health providers in schools across the state from 1,810 in 2019 to 3,575 in 2023 (an increase of 92.5 percent).**

The state also increased the number of nursing providers in schools from 245 in 2019 to 373 in 2023 (an increase of 52.2 percent). Now, more than 85,000 Michigan students annually receive screenings through Medicaid in their schools and nearly 30,000 receive direct services. Importantly, Michigan also has been able to provide services in rural and isolated school districts that did not have access to healthcare previously.

Percentage Increase in School-Based Mental Health Social Workers, School Counselors, and School Nurses Across the U.S.

### SOCIAL WORKERS



**43%**  
increase

### SCHOOL COUNSELORS



**3%**  
increase

### SCHOOL NURSES



**23%**  
increase

Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics Current Population Survey (CPS). IPUMS CPS, University of Minnesota, [www.ipums.org](http://www.ipums.org).



*A teacher works with students at STEAM day at Timber Lane Elementary School in Falls Church, VA.*

## UPLIFTING THE TEACHING PROFESSION

### > Our Impact:

The Biden-Harris Administration acted boldly to address America’s educator shortage, which reached crisis levels when the pandemic devastated public schools, shrinking the workforce by 9 percent and threatening our nation’s capacity to support students’ academic recovery. The Department worked swiftly to distribute the American Rescue Plan’s \$130 billion investment in K-12 education, with school districts directing \$30 billion toward hiring, recruiting, and retaining educators and for improving compensation for teachers and staff. To address the recruitment challenge posed by poor compensation—with teachers earning, on average, 27 percent less than peers with similar degrees—the Department also used national convenings, resources, and direct communication from the Secretary to galvanize support for increasing

educator salaries. Additionally, the U.S. Department of Education, in collaboration with the U.S. Department of Labor, expanded affordable pathways into the teaching profession by helping 46 states, the District of Columbia, and Puerto Rico to establish earn-while-you-learn registered teacher apprenticeship programs. Also, today, funding for teacher residency and principal preparation programs is up by 34 percent, funding for special education teacher preparation programs is up by 28 percent, and funding for multilingual educator development is up by 12 percent. As a result of all these efforts and other actions by the Department, 643,000 more teachers, counselors, nurses, and other professionals are working in America’s schools—more than at any other time in the past decade—and teacher pay is up by an estimated 9.5 percent since 2021.

**FROM THE FIELD:**

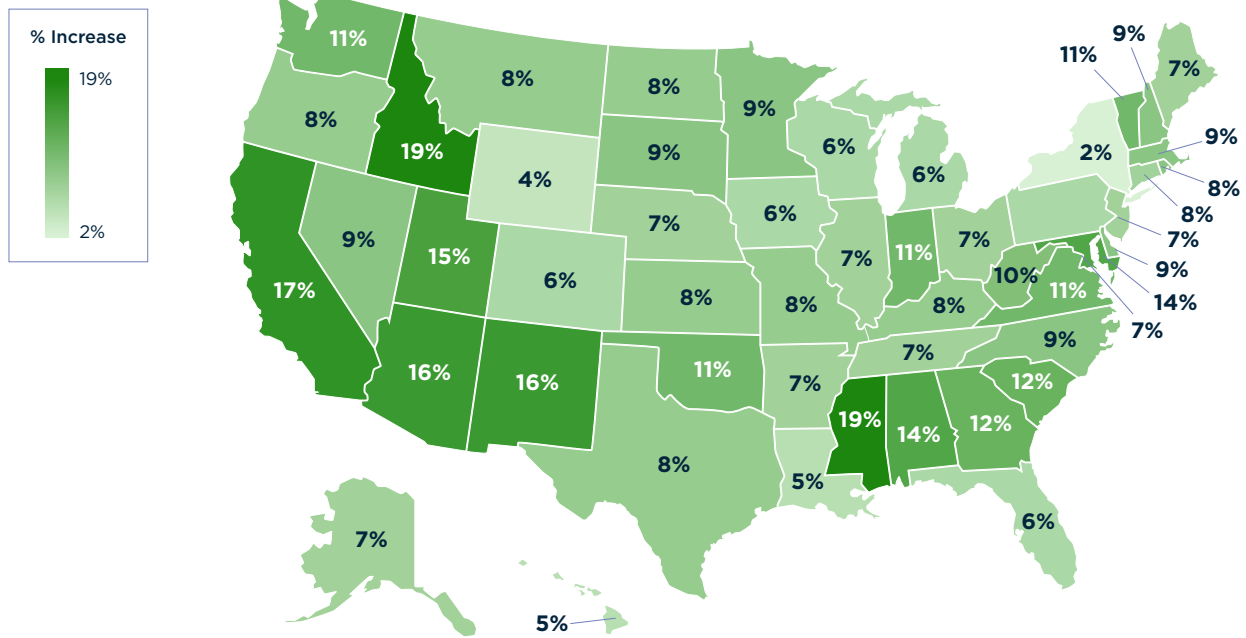
**New Mexico has enacted historic pay raises, resulting in average teacher pay in the state increasing by 17 percent from 2021 to 2023 alone.**

These increases are changing the everyday lives of teachers. For example, Zoe Gierman, an elementary school teacher in Santa Fe in her ninth year of teaching, and paid on the state's highest pay tier, had previously always shared an apartment or small house with roommates, due to the high cost of housing in her community. With the help of a significant pay raise signed into law by Governor

Michelle Lujan Grisham, in 2023, Zoe was finally able to move into her own place and live independently.

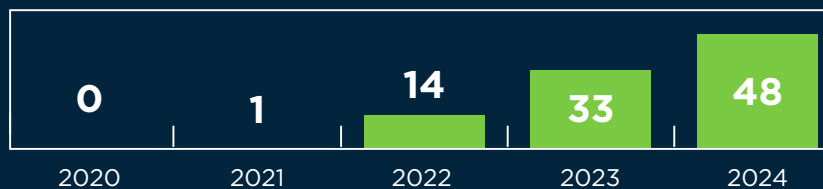
And in Nevada, the University of Nevada, Las Vegas (UNLV) used American Rescue Plan funds to transform an educator preparation program into a Registered Teacher Apprenticeship. This change allowed paraprofessionals and other school staff to earn bachelor's degrees and teaching licenses at UNLV at no cost. The program has been a success with a graduation rate of 97 percent, outpacing the graduation rate of UNLV's traditional educator preparation program.

Educator Salary Increases, by State, Fall 2020 - Fall 2023



Source: National Education Association 2020-2021 Teacher Salary Benchmark Report and 2023-2024 Estimates

**States with Registered Apprenticeship Programs for Teachers**  
(including the District of Columbia and Puerto Rico)



Source: U.S. Department of Labor, Employment and Training Administration, Office of Apprenticeship



*Teachers at Casey Elementary School in Jackson, MS share how the American Rescue Plan impacted schools and educators during a visit by Secretary Cardona.*

## DIVERSIFYING THE TEACHING PROFESSION

### > Our Impact:

Evidence shows that educator diversity has a positive impact on students of all backgrounds. Yet, today, while more than half of students in our K-12 schools are young people of color, just 24 percent of our nation's educators identify as people of color. That is why the Biden-Harris Administration worked to prioritize educator diversity across grant programs, awarding nearly \$1.5 billion in competitive funds to more than 400 grantees nationwide, in addition to billions made available annually through formula programs. The Department also funded professional development for

5,000 multilingual educators and, for the first time ever, secured funding for the Augustus F. Hawkins Centers of Excellence Program. This program, authorized by Congress in 2008 and not funded until 2022, supports comprehensive, high-quality teacher preparation programs at Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) and Tribal Colleges and Universities (TCUs), Hispanic-Serving Institutions (HSIs), and other Minority-Serving Institutions (MSIs), which, collectively prepare more than 40 percent of all teachers of color to work in classrooms across the country.

FROM THE FIELD:

**Bowie State University received \$1.5 million under the Department’s Augustus F. Hawkins Centers of Excellence Program.**

This funding is supporting the Bowie Black Male Educators Project, which prepares Black male educators to work with students in early childhood education programs, elementary and secondary schools, and special education programs. “It’s no secret that Black male teachers are in short supply,” said Dr. Julius L. Davis, founding director of the Bowie Black Male Educators Project and a professor in the university’s college of education.

Dr. Davis also noted, “The Augustus F. Hawkins grant has been a game changer. We can offer Black male students support, mentors, experiential learning, and financial backing, which goes a long way in attracting students to the education field.” Bowie State University student Zaire Bond stated, “My father teaches social studies and U.S. history, and my grandmother was an elementary and high school teacher, so [teaching] is part of my DNA. But meeting Dr. Davis and other Black male teachers solidified my desire to become a teacher and study at Bowie State. And with the financial support I am receiving from the Augustus F. Hawkins grant, I know I can attain my goal and become a Black male educator.”

U.S. Department of Education Discretionary Investments in Educator Diversity, by State

STATE	AWARD AMOUNT	STATE	AWARD AMOUNT	STATE	AWARD AMOUNT
AK	\$8,002,610	KS	\$13,069,917	NY	\$79,479,040
AL	\$2,213,182	KY	\$6,169,200	OH	\$16,159,085
AR	\$33,268,952	LA	\$58,360,882	OK	\$7,858,668
AZ	\$38,099,580	MA	\$84,811,931	OR	\$6,241,371
CA	\$152,337,573	MD	\$20,573,563	PA	\$11,415,111
CO	\$13,994,569	MI	\$66,827,614	Puerto Rico	\$1,254,404
CT	\$23,579,152	MN	\$9,893,276	RI	\$14,709,881
DC	\$13,167,427	MO	\$8,065,163	SC	\$97,743,585
DE	\$316,952	MS	\$2,802,087	SD	\$1,223,636
FL	\$99,396,566	MT	\$2,744,128	TN	\$63,153,791
GA	\$48,561,427	NC	\$116,314,433	TX	\$102,705,844
Guam	\$150,000	ND	\$1,245,595	UT	\$3,779,145
HI	\$3,563,230	NE	\$1,998,814	VA	\$43,078,270
IA	\$17,217,501	NH	\$498,073	VT	\$1,247,255
ID	\$1,149,161	NJ	\$2,772,952	WA	\$6,844,358
IL	\$62,917,316	NM	\$37,857,812	WI	\$2,919,853
IN	\$28,904,578	NV	\$8,339,836		

Source: U.S. Department of Education, Office of Planning, Evaluation, and Policy Development (January 2021-October 2024)



*A student works on mathematics and literacy skills at the Boys and Girls Club of Standing Rock in McLaughlin, SD.*

## INCREASING MULTILINGUAL EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES

### > Our Impact:

To close educational opportunity gaps, increase students' academic achievement, and prepare more young people for success in the global economy, the Department has led a national movement to elevate the importance of multilingualism under Secretary Cardona's leadership. Through new federal investments, national convenings, and stronger technical assistance and resources, including a new English Learner Family Toolkit, the Department has bolstered state and local efforts to protect English learners' civil rights, funded professional development for more than 5,000 multilingual educators, invested \$20 million to support the revitalization of 18 Native languages, and galvanized support across the nation for dual language instruction and high-quality

opportunities for students to become bilingual, biliterate, and bicultural. Importantly, for the first time ever, all 50 states and the District of Columbia offer students the opportunity to earn a Seal of Biliteracy. The Seal of Biliteracy is an award given by a school, district, or state that recognizes students who have achieved proficiency in two or more languages by high school graduation. The Department celebrated biliteracy as a superpower by hosting a Seal of Biliteracy Summit in 2024, one of four national convenings that engaged more than 3,000 stakeholders. Additionally, the Department invested \$2 million in the National Clearinghouse for English Language Acquisition to share resources, data, and promising practices with districts, states, educators,



families, and students. The Department has worked to raise the bar for multilingualism, including for Native languages, by playing a key role in the ten-year, whole-of-government strategy to revitalize Native languages and by launching the first-ever National Native Language Resource Center. The Department also

invested \$46 million to establish technical assistance centers through the Comprehensive Centers program to support state and local educational agencies in supporting English and multilingual learners, among other activities.

### Benefits of Multilingualism



**Increased understanding** of world cultures



**Improved learning outcomes** across subjects



**Greater executive function**, including attention and mental flexibility



**Higher levels of creativity** and empathy



**More job opportunities** and higher pay

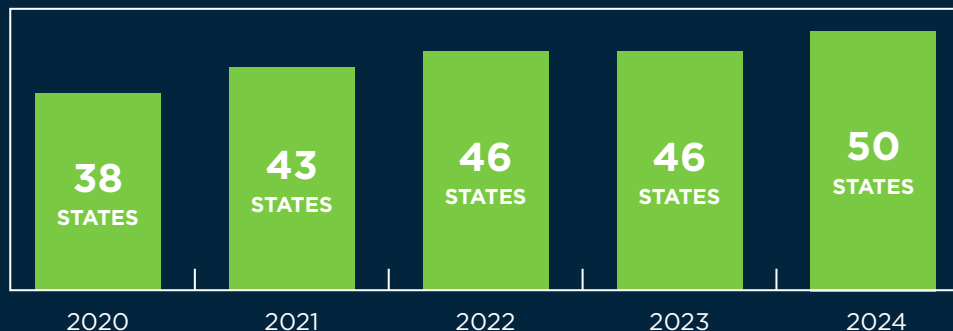
#### FROM THE FIELD:

**In the Rio Grande Valley, the Pharr-San Juan Alamo Independent School District (PSJA ISD) offers a dual language enrichment program designed for students to build stronger cognitive and academic skills through the development of bilingualism and biliteracy.**

Students who participate in the program are provided with academic instruction in both English and Spanish

from preschool through twelfth grade. Through rich, rigorous educational experiences, students in the program master English and Spanish and enhance their learning by developing the ability to speak, read, write, and think critically in both languages. Currently, there are more than 14,000 elementary, middle, and high school students in the program. In April 2024, more than 500 PSJA ISD seniors graduated from the dual language enrichment program, each earning a Seal of Biliteracy on their diploma. Dual language programs like the one offered by PSJA ISD help students to become prepared to compete and succeed in the global economy.

Number of States with an Approved Statewide Seal of Biliteracy



Source: The Seal of Biliteracy's National Seal of Biliteracy Report



*Students at Escuela Elemental Villa Marina in Puerto Rico engage in classroom activities during one of Secretary Cardona's visits to the island.*

## TRANSFORMING EDUCATION IN PUERTO RICO

### > Our Impact:

Under Secretary Cardona's leadership, the U.S. Department of Education made historic investments in Puerto Rico's students and educators. After 12 years without a raise, American Rescue Plan funds paved the way for a \$1,000 monthly pay increase for Puerto Rico's public-school teachers, a 30-percent increase for the average educator. The Biden-Harris Administration also approved Public Service Loan Forgiveness for more than 4,000 public servants on the island and, for the first time, awarded a Full-Service Community Schools grant to Puerto Rico.

Most ambitiously, the Department guided Puerto Rico's education system through a transformational effort to decentralize a unitary school system that has struggled to adequately serve its students. The Initiative for Decentralization of Education and Autonomy of Regions will support local autonomy through democratic decision-making, create a more transparent and accountable education system, and improve local communities' access to federal resources and support.

### > FROM THE FIELD:



**“The latest pay raise I received has a huge impact on my career as a teacher.** Firstly, it helps me relieve stress by allowing me to focus more on my work and on my students' experience. In addition, it gives me the opportunity to

enroll in professional courses or attend conferences, improving my skills and knowledge as a teacher.”

— *Magaly Rivera Andujar,*  
*Second Grade Teacher,*  
*Escuela Pedro Amador de Camuy*



Starting in 2022, Puerto Rico teachers received **a pay bump amounting to \$1,000 per month, or a 30% increase** for the average teacher.

*Source: Puerto Rico State Department of Education*



*Staff celebrate the first-ever Pride flag-raising event at the U.S. Department of Education headquarters building.*

## PROTECTING STUDENTS' CIVIL RIGHTS

### > Our Impact:

Over the last four years, the U.S. Department of Education's Office for Civil Rights (OCR) received and resolved the highest number of civil rights complaints in the Department's history—55,361—and maintained the Biden-Harris Administration's unwavering commitment to providing all students with inclusive learning environments that respect their civil rights. The Department's case resolutions touched far-reaching issues of equity and access, including allegations of sex-based and race-based discrimination after book bans, the discriminatory application of discipline against students of color and students with disabilities, and—following the October

2023 Hamas attacks in Israel and subsequent conflict—the disturbing rise of reported incidents of shared ancestry harassment primarily impacting Jewish, Muslim, Palestinian, and Arab students on college campuses. The Department also spearheaded the finalization of the most comprehensive Title IX rules since the Department first regulated in 1975, strengthening protections against all forms of sex discrimination, including against pregnancy. And importantly, the Department created numerous resources to help schools better meet their civil rights obligations for English learners and students with disabilities.

### FROM THE FIELD:

**When the U.S. Supreme Court's ruling on the use of race in admissions sharply curtailed a tool for creating diverse campus communities, OCR partnered with the U.S. Department of Justice to provide resources to help colleges and universities understand and comply with the decision as they continue to pursue campuses that are racially diverse and that include**

**students with a range of viewpoints, talents, backgrounds, and experiences.**

These resources distilled the Court's core holding and offered example steps that institutions of higher education and school districts lawfully could take to achieve a student body that is diverse across a range of factors, including race and ethnicity. Maya Wiley, president and CEO of The Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights, noted, "The civil rights community has called for such guidelines over many months and welcomes this much needed step in the fight to ensure equal opportunity for all students."

The Department's Work to Protect Civil Rights in Education Reaches:



**79+**million  
individuals



**18,100**  
local education  
agencies



**6,000**  
postsecondary  
institutions

Source: U.S. Department of Education, Office for Civil Rights



*Students from the Community College of Allegheny County in Pittsburgh, PA engage in a hands-on career, technology, and engineering (CTE) program.*

## STRENGTHENING COLLEGE AND CAREER PATHWAYS

### > Our Impact:

Every student deserves a pathway to a rewarding, well-paying career. Under Secretary Miguel Cardona’s leadership, the Department launched “Unlocking Career Success,” an initiative to galvanize collaboration among state and local leaders, schools, colleges, and workforce partners to equip high school graduates with four keys to success. Those keys include students earning college credits and workforce credentials and having access to work-based learning opportunities and career advising. The Department also launched the first-ever Career-Connected High School grant program, which invested \$31 million to

support innovative partnerships among high schools, institutions of higher education, and employers that, together, are projected to provide 120,000 students with pathways to high-wage, high-demand careers. The Department also issued comprehensive playbooks for scaling up successful pathways models, and organized convenings with other federal agencies that engaged teams from 43 states in efforts to build new pathways for students in fast-growing fields such as clean energy, manufacturing, semiconductors, and other sectors supported by the Biden-Harris Administration’s Investing in America agenda.

Four Keys to Success 

1



COLLEGE CREDITS

2



WORKFORCE CREDENTIALS

3



WORK-BASED LEARNING

4



CAREER ADVISING

FROM THE FIELD:

Through the Career-Connected High School program, Texas' Region One Education Service Center in the Rio Grande Valley is collaborating with nine local educational agencies and community partners to serve more than 4,000 students of color, students from low-income backgrounds, and rural students.

The program is expanding opportunities for postsecondary education and career guidance; increasing students' access to dual enrollment educational options, which allow high school students to take a college course and earn both high school and college credit; expanding high-quality worked-based learning opportunities; and increasing the number of students earning industry-recognized credentials. In its first year, the program successfully engaged students in hands-on experiences such as paid construction internships and health care workshops and increased dual enrollment participation by 22 percent.

The first-ever Career-Connected High School program invested **\$31 million** to provide **120,000 students** with pathways to **high-wage, high-demand careers.**



Source: U.S. Department of Education, Office of Career, Technical, and Adult Education



*During the 2024 back-to-school bus tour stop in Chicago, IL, Secretary Cardona visits Access Living, which provides opportunities for adults with disabilities.*

## SUPPORTING STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

### > Our Impact:

Recognizing that we cannot raise the bar for all students without raising the bar for students with disabilities, the U.S. Department of Education took bold steps to support a vision for education that embraces individual differences, promotes achievement, advances equity, and ensures every student has a pathway to success. To better meet the needs of individuals with disabilities from birth through education and employment, the Biden-Harris Administration won historic funding increases totaling \$1.5 billion for Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) programs and \$640 million for vocational

rehabilitation programs. Importantly, the number of state vocational rehabilitation agencies with waitlists has dropped from 31 in 2020 to just eight in 2024, and 42 states are now meeting their obligations to provide pre-employment transition services to high school students with disabilities—up from only 14 in 2021. The Department also awarded more than \$700 million in grants to improve access to competitive integrated employment and to strengthen state workforce systems to help thousands of people with disabilities to secure good jobs for real pay.



## FROM THE FIELD:



"I teach to ensure that every child who is deaf or hard of hearing can achieve their goals through language and literacy. I am hard of hearing, and I was proud to serve as a role model for my students when I worked as a classroom and itinerant teacher of the deaf. Now a Columbia University faculty member, I train the next generation of educators and scholars ... My students, many of whom are scholars [with the U.S. Department of Education's Office of Special

Education Programs (OSEP)] ... must master both challenging coursework and specialized clinical skills. What keeps us going is an enduring belief in the potential of each child and family to achieve their dreams. I am grateful for OSEP's support as we work to facilitate those dreams."

— *Elaine Smolen, Ph.D.,  
Visiting Assistant Professor in Deaf and Hard  
of Hearing Education, Columbia University and  
U.S. Department of Education OSEP Scholar*

With support from the Department,

**7,000** more special education professionals

have been **trained to enter the teaching workforce** across the country.



Source: U.S. Department of Education, Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services



*Secretary Cardona participates in a roundtable discussion hosted by Denmark Technical College to discuss the ways the Department is helping to alleviate the burden of overwhelming student debt.*

## FIXING A BROKEN SYSTEM: STUDENT LOAN DEBT RELIEF

### > Our Impact:

Before President Biden took office, millions of student loan borrowers were unable to access debt relief for which they qualified. The Biden-Harris Administration thus launched an ambitious effort to fix broken loan forgiveness programs, culminating in the approval of \$175 billion in debt relief for nearly 5 million borrowers—more than any administration in history. This effort included game-changing improvements to the Public Service Loan Forgiveness program, enabling the Biden-Harris Administration to forgive the loans of more than 1 million teachers, nurses,

first responders, and other public servants across America—up from just 7,000 during the previous administration. The Department also addressed past administrative failures and accounting errors to provide relief to more than 1.4 million borrowers through income-driven repayment; approved debt relief for 1.6 million students who were defrauded by predatory schools, such as Corinthian Colleges and the Art Institutes; and automated relief for borrowers with permanent disabilities.

FROM THE FIELD:

“Those of us who pursue civil service jobs, we’re not in them to be rich, we’re in them to make our communities better,” said Taj Anwar Boall, a paramedic captain and EMS supervisor who has served with the City of Atlanta for 15 years. Early on in her career, Taj struggled to repay her student loans while making ends meet, even

relying on nutritional assistance to feed her five children. After encountering difficulty applying for the Public Service Loan Forgiveness program, she gave up and just continued to make payments. During the Biden-Harris Administration, however, she was encouraged to reapply, and Taj had her loans forgiven. “Putting my life on the line, falling through floors, getting bled on, evading danger on the highway responding to accidents—all of that comes with a personal cost. But this tells me that someone out there cares. ... That makes me feel good as a firefighter.”

The U.S. Department of Education Approved Student Debt Relief for Nearly **5 Million Borrowers** By:



Helping more than **1.4 million borrowers** get **\$56.5 billion in forgiveness** through income driven repayment adjustments



Ensuring that **1 million+ borrowers** get **\$74 billion in relief** through Public Service Loan Forgiveness



Approving nearly **\$28.7 billion in relief** for more than **1.6 million borrowers** cheated by their schools



Delivering **\$16.2 billion in relief** for almost **572,000 borrowers** who have a total and permanent disability

Source: U.S. Department of Education, Office of Federal Student Aid



*Students prepare to graduate from the prison education program at the Cheshire Correctional Facility in Connecticut, where they earned degrees through a partnership with Wesleyan University, supported by the U.S. Department of Education.*

## INCREASING ACCESS, AFFORDABILITY, AND SUCCESS IN HIGHER EDUCATION

### > Our Impact:

To help more students afford, access, and earn college degrees and credentials, the Biden-Harris Administration made bold investments in college affordability and student success. President Biden secured the largest increase in a decade to the maximum Pell Grant award, which is projected to help more than 7 million students afford higher education every year. And in 2021 alone, the President's American Rescue Plan helped colleges provide 12.7 million students with emergency scholarships to stay enrolled. President Biden also created the SAVE plan, which, if implemented, would make

college dramatically more affordable by slashing in half undergraduate borrowers' monthly student loan payments. Recognizing that tuition bills are not the only barrier that prevent underserved students from completing their degrees, the U.S. Department of Education also invested \$222 million to help colleges improve access to affordable childcare, housing, mental health services, and other supports, while standing up a new \$95 million Postsecondary Student Success Grant program to help underfunded institutions scale up evidence-based strategies that improve outcomes and increase graduation rates.

### > FROM THE FIELD:

**In January 2022, Secretary Cardona joined First Lady Dr. Jill Biden on a visit to Bergen Community College, which used funding from the American Rescue Plan and the U.S. Department of Education's Child Care Access Means Parents in School (CCAMPIS) program to provide child care to parents pursuing degrees.**

Kezia Rodriguez, an aspiring nurse, took advantage of the tuition-free enrollments at the community college's early learning facility for her twin 3-year-old daughters. Kezia credits the child development center for her success. "The child development center is not just child care. It is the beginning of my educational journey."

More than **1 in 5** college students **are parents.**



*Source: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics*



*HBCU alumni pose with their college and university pennants during the 2023 HBCU Summit.*

## INVESTING IN MINORITY-SERVING HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS

### > Our Impact:

Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) and Tribal Colleges and Universities (TCUs), Hispanic-Serving Institutions (HSIs), and other Minority-Serving Institutions (MSIs) prepare large numbers of first-generation college students, students of color, students from low-income communities, and other underserved students to thrive. These institutions also were disproportionately impacted by the pandemic. But even before the public health crisis, these colleges and universities often struggled with chronic underinvestment and funding inequities that undermined their capacity to drive innovation and student success. The Biden-Harris Administration responded by delivering record investments to support an equitable recovery from the pandemic at these institutions and worked intentionally, across the federal government, to position them for greater success. For example, President Biden not only invested a historic \$17 billion in America’s HBCUs, but fully empowered the White House Initiative on HBCUs to elevate their presence across the federal government, leading to exciting new partnerships,

including the U.S. Air Force’s first-ever HBCU-led University Affiliated Research Center. President Biden also invested \$16 billion in America’s HSIs, attended by more than half of all Hispanic college students in the United States. The President re-established the White House Initiative and President’s Board of Advisors on Advancing Educational Equity, Excellence, and Economic Opportunity for Hispanics, which led a group of 35 agencies in increasing federal opportunities for HSIs and Hispanic students. The President also signed the first-ever executive order establishing the White House Initiative and President’s Board of Advisors on HSIs to focus on eliminating barriers to federal funding, preparing more students for careers in federal service, and enhancing their capacity to catalyze innovation in high-demand fields. During his first year in office, President Biden also issued an Executive Order establishing a White House Initiative to collaborate with leaders from Tribal Nations to advance educational equity, excellence, and opportunity for Native American students and to strengthen TCUs.

The Biden-Harris Administration Made Historic Investments  
in HBCUs, HSIs, and TCUs



**\$17 billion**

INVESTMENT IN HBCUs



**\$16 billion**

INVESTMENT IN HSIS



**\$190 million**

IN PANDEMIC FUNDING PROVIDED EMERGENCY FINANCIAL AID

to nearly 24,000 TCU students, helping them stay in school

*Source: U.S. Department of Education, Office of Postsecondary Education*

FROM THE FIELD:

When President Biden's CHIPS and Science Act invested nearly \$53 billion to revitalize American manufacturing in semiconductors, the White House Initiative on HBCUs—housed at the U.S. Department of Education—saw a historic opportunity to help diversify a critical industry.

This effort culminated in the launch of HBCU CHIPS Network, a new partnership that was announced at the U.S. Department of Commerce, with the White House Initiative on HBCUs serving in a convening role. Through this partnership, the Georgia Institute of Technology is leading efforts at nearly 30 public and private HBCUs to increase their research capacity and instruction aligned with semiconductor manufacturing. Already, the consortium has secured nearly \$110 million in federal funding.



*Graduates of the College of Business Administration and the College of Undergraduate Studies at the University of Central Florida listen to a commencement address by Secretary Cardona in May 2023.*



## STRENGTHENING ACCOUNTABILITY IN HIGHER EDUCATION

### > Our Impact:

Investing in higher education should lead to a brighter future; but, in recent decades, too many students have been driven into debt by colleges selling degrees and credentials of little value in the workforce. That's why the Biden-Harris Administration enacted tough new gainful employment rules, protecting up to 700,000 students from programs that abuse taxpayer-funded federal financial aid programs and that routinely leave graduates worse off for attending. The Department also strengthened protections for U.S. veterans and servicemembers against predatory colleges targeting

their G.I. Bill benefits, and empowered Federal Student Aid's Office of Enforcement to be a true cop on the beat against deceptive practices that put students at risk. Finally, to help more students, families, educators, and advisors make more informed choices about where to invest in higher education, the Department upgraded the College Scorecard and created new tools to provide greater insights into post-college earnings, alumni career outcomes, and campus diversity, and updated other valuable data, such as on college costs and graduation rates.

### > FROM THE FIELD:

**After proudly serving in the U.S. Army, Tasha Berkhalter used her G.I. Bill benefits to study criminal justice and pursue her dream of working for the FBI.** Instead, she was targeted by ITT Technical Institute, a notorious for-profit school that sold her false

promises and left her with a degree that employers said was worthless. Buried in unaffordable student debt and struggling to provide for her children, Tasha filed a claim with the U.S. Department of Education's borrower defense program, only to have it ignored by the previous administration. Things changed when President Biden took office. In September 2021, the Department discharged Tasha's debt.



The U.S. Department of Education's

**90/10 regulations**

closed a loophole in the Higher Education Act

that allowed for-profit colleges to aggressively recruit

**VETERANS and SERVICEMEMBERS.**



Source: U.S. Department of Education, Office of the Under Secretary



*Students are pictured at Jackson Elementary School in Green Bay, WI.*



*Deputy Secretary Marten teams up with NASA for an engagement with students at Wheatley Education Campus in Washington, DC.*



U.S. Department of Education  
Miguel A. Cardona, Ed.D.  
U.S. Secretary of Education

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