

**Senate and House Democratic Policy Committees
Joint Hearing**

“The President’s Budget Request for Fiscal Year 2004”

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First, I would like to thank the Democratic Policy Committee for asking me to speak here today. My name is Beverly Ingle, and I am a 6th Grade teacher at Laredo Middle School in the Cherry Creek District #5 in Colorado. I have been a teacher for 24 years.

I would like to point out to the Committee that despite having a Master’s degree and 60 additional credits, I’m not considered to be a “highly qualified” teacher under the new federal education law. That’s because of a change in definition of “6th grade,” previously it was an elementary school grade; now it’s considered a middle school grade. Well, my degree is in elementary school education, not middle school, so I’m not considered a “highly qualified” teacher under the new law. I share this fact with the Committee just to show the law is not just under-funded, it can also be inflexible.

I would also like to extend greetings from the President of the National Education Association, Reg Weaver, who has a keen interest in the proposed budget we’re talking about today.

I thought I would share with the Committee what a typical day is like for a teacher. My day starts at the school at 6:45 a.m., with the students arriving at 7:15 a.m. I spend time with about 120 students throughout the day in my classes. It’s a whirlwind of activity, to say the least!

The last school bell rings at 2:20 p.m., but that’s not when my day ends. Like my fellow teachers, I know the true meaning of “leave no child behind” -- I host a homework club after school, and I stay until the last child leaves. Then I head home for grading papers and starting it all over again the next day. I can assure you that despite these long days, I love my job. I would not trade it for anything in the world.

It’s because I love my job that I’m here today. I’m concerned about the need for investments in our schools. The federal education budget, as proposed by President Bush for Fiscal Year 2004, has not grown at the same rate as inflation or student enrollment. That’s a formula for failure. Despite the rhetoric and claims coming out of the Department of Education and the White House, the President’s education budget has only increased 1.9 percent from Fiscal Year 2002 to Fiscal Year 2004.

Added to this is a Colorado state budget shortfall of over \$800 million. A shortfall that, combined with the lack of federal funding for necessary education programs, will leave every student, every school, and every school district behind.

In my state, the Republican legislature is trying to make up the shortfall by pulling back on a statewide constitutional amendment that would have provided guaranteed funding for schools in the state. Other school funding has already been spent: my school, for example, bought textbooks in the spring only to have Republican legislators decide not to meet those funding commitments the following fall. This left my school district, and many others, even further in the hole.

Title I, the federal program geared toward the most-needy students in our classrooms, is in serious trouble – a situation that is only going to get worse as the “No Child Left Behind” law is implemented and not adequately funded. The Bush budget request for 2004 is more than \$6 billion below the authorized level of the No Child Left Behind Act. The invasive nature of the No Child Left Behind Act without adequate resources makes it an “unfunded mandate” of the worst kind.

Under the new law, schools deemed “low performing” will be required to invest 35 percent of their scarce Title I funds into transportation services to other schools, or for “supplemental services.” Those funds are currently being used to hire teachers -- teachers who are much needed in these communities.

The federal funding being cut for safe and drug-free schools and after-school programs is critical to helping our students succeed. I’m here to tell you that as a teacher, I know how badly these kids need after-school programs.

I believe the Bush budget shows mixed-up priorities -- it proposes 1.5 trillion dollars more for tax cuts but only 2.8 billion dollars more for education -- and cutting the funding for these programs obviously leaves many children behind.

In closing, I would urge the policymakers in this room to remember that investments in our children should be about more than just rhetoric – we need real funding to help students achieve. Thank you.