

Thank you, Chairman Kline.

Education is the most important tool we have for economic development in my district, the Northern Mariana Islands.

That's why I joined this Committee when I first came to Congress in 2009.

That's why I rejoined the Committee this year, when a seat opened up.

I wanted to make sure that students in the Northern Mariana Islands get the same support from their federal government that students in every other part of America receive.

Because I believe that, if we give our young people a fine education, they will use that education to improve their communities – both economically and by being responsible citizens.

Unfortunately, the Elementary and Secondary Education Act does not provide parity in federal support for my students.

Title I-A, specifically, sets aside one percent of funding to be shared by the Bureau of Indian Education and the four “outlying areas,” as we are called – American Samoa, Guam, the Virgin Islands, and the Northern Marianas.

As a result, the students I represent get short-changed.

Like Title I students everywhere in America, my students come from families that don't have a lot of money for books and basic supplies and educational experiences. That's why Title I exists: to help make up the difference for students unlucky enough to be born to parents who don't have much money.

But the one percent set-aside – of which only about one-quarter goes to the outlying areas – is not making up that difference.

Originally, I understand, this set-aside was intended to ensure that even areas as small as the Northern Marianas had a minimum amount of funding – enough to provide a meaningful program.

But, as the years have gone by and the number of students the set-aside serves has increased, the outlying areas now actually receive far less help under the set-aside than we would if funds were allocated under the regular state formula.

CRS did a report for me a few months after I was first sworn in, calculating the shortfall. The outlying areas would have received an additional \$86 million using the state funding formula.

Poor students in the Northern Mariana Islands would have received 636 percent more Title I-A funding. 636 percent more funding – if we were treated equally.

Now I know what some Members are thinking: yes, but those people in the Northern Marianas don't pay federal taxes. They are lucky to get anything at all from the federal government, much less equal treatment.

But the fact is the families, whose children qualify for Title I assistance, don't pay federal taxes no matter where they live. They don't pay federal taxes in California; they don't pay in Minnesota. They don't make enough money to owe federal taxes.

I'm talking about federal income tax, of course. Those families in California and Minnesota pay their Social Security tax. They pay their Medicare tax.

But so do the families I represent in the Northern Mariana Islands.

Look, if the criterion to qualify students for federal Title I assistance was whether their parents pay federal income taxes, then almost no student anywhere in America would qualify for help.

The whole point of the program is to help students from families that don't have a lot of money.

I can also hear Members thinking: yes, but if students in the Northern Marianas get more help, students in my district will get less.

And you're right.

And that is why – in addition to its perpetuation of the outlying area set-aside that treats my students like second-class citizens – I oppose H.R. 5.

Because, when we should be increasing federal funding to ensure that students everywhere in America have what they need to help our country maintain its economic dominance, H.R. 5 leaves us underfunded.

When we should be enlarging the pie, so I don't have to take money from your students to make sure that my students have what they need, H.R. 5 freezes funding at the current sequestration level.

And it keeps that inadequate funding level all the way through the 2019-2020 school year.

Even if sequestration were to be lifted, this bill would lock in these historically low funding levels for the next six years.

I know Members are concerned about leaving their children and grandchildren in debt, because Congress spends too much money we don't have.

But how much more a disservice we do by leaving the next generations in debt and robbing them, too, of the intellectual tools that come from a fine education.

If we don't help those students, who come from families that pay no taxes, we are consigning many of those students to lives equally poor – and equally unable to contribute to the economic well-being of America.

Those students we fail to educate won't be job creators. And they won't be the best workers.

They will live lives so much less prosperous than they could if they had the right education.

They will be poorer. America will be poorer.

We on this Committee should be doing so much more to ensure that does not happen.

Thank you.