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**REMARKS OF SENATOR EDWARD M. KENNEDY ON NCLB REAUTHORIZATION:
MODERNIZING MIDDLE AND HIGH SCHOOLS FOR THE 21ST CENTURY**

U.S. Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor and Pensions

I welcome our witnesses to this hearing on modernizing middle and high schools we prepare to reauthorize the No Child Left Behind Act. The Act sets lofty goals for all schools to meet, and requires states to establish strong standards, a rigorous curriculum, and reliable assessments. It's helped schools make significant progress in closing achievement gaps and helping students learn.

One of our principal priorities in the reauthorization is to ensure that the Act is working for all students at every grade level in elementary school, middle school and high school.

Recent surveys demonstrate that we still have much to do in secondary schools. Only 30 percent of 8th grade students scored proficient or better in 2005 on math assessment and reading assessment. In 12th grade, less than a quarter of students scored proficient or better on the math assessment, and only 35 percent were proficient or better on the reading assessment. It's clear that secondary school students need as much attention and help in these essential courses as students in lower grades do.

We also need to do more to assist students in the transition from middle school to high school and help them graduate. About 1,000 high schools across the country only graduate half their students, and only about 70 percent of high school students graduate on time. Among African Americans and Latinos, only 55 percent graduate on time. It's clear that high schools need more assistance in supporting and retaining students.

Federal investment at the middle and high school level is not sufficient. The main source of federal funds is through the Title I program. Yet, only 8 percent of students who benefit from these funds are in high school. 90 percent of high schools with very low graduation rates have many low-income students. But only a quarter of these schools receive Title I funds. We need to dedicate more resources and support for secondary schools to improve academic achievement and ensure that every student has a fair opportunity to graduate.

States and cities across the country are already taking steps to address these challenges, such as offering extra help during the school day, extending learning time, and other school-based interventions. To improve Boston's high schools, the district worked with private partners to create smaller learning communities, improve instruction, and strengthen professional development.

Boston high school programs now focus on business, technology, health professions, arts, public service, engineering, sciences, international studies, and social justice. Through many of these programs, students can enroll in courses for college credit or get hands-on experience in a field that interests them.

We know that proven strategies and interventions will help students make progress, stay in school and succeed. Research conducted by one of our panelists, Dr. Robert Balfanz shows that we can identify students who are most at-risk for not completing high school as early as sixth grade. Early intervention, quality teachers, small classes, and data-driven instruction will strengthen schools and help keep students engaged.

We also know that better alignment of standards and curricula between middle school

and high school can ease the transition for many students. High school students also have to be prepared to meet the expectations of college and the workplace. We need to promote models

that allow students to pursue college level work as soon as possible, such as dual enrollment, early college high schools, International Baccalaureate, and Advanced Placement programs, each of which can make a difference in students' skill levels and future opportunities.

To do all this, we can't remain bound to the schoolhouse model of past decades. We need to bring our middle and high schools into the 21st century.

So, I look forward to hearing from our witnesses today about the successful programs they're implementing.

I turn now to my good friend from Wyoming, Senator Enzi so he can make his opening remarks.

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