MEMORANDUM

TO: ASAHP Members  
DATE: June 8, 2020  
RE: Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor and Pensions Hearing on “COVID-19: Going Back to College Safely”

June 4, 2020, 10:00 AM, 430 Dirksen
[HEARING LINK]

Overview:
The Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor and Pensions held a hearing on “COVID-19: Going Back to College Safely.” Topics discussed by the committee include institutional plans for COVID-19 testing, isolation of students who test positive or have been exposed, social distancing guidelines, disparities for underrepresented college students with distance learning, contact tracing, and collaborative efforts between the institution, local, state, and federal agencies.

Opening Statements:
Committee Chairman Lamar Alexander (R-TN) [Full Statement]
The question for administrators of 6,000 colleges and universities is not whether to reopen in August, but how to do it safely. President Trump and Congress should not be telling the California State University System that it must open its classes in person, or telling Notre Dame it cannot—or telling UT-Knoxville that it must test everyone on the campus or telling Brown University that it cannot. Colleges themselves, not Washington D.C., should make those decisions.

I recently was on a phone call with about 90 presidents of Tennessee’s 127 institutions of higher education, and almost all of them are planning to resume in-person classes in the fall, but they want governments to create liability protection against being sued if a student becomes sick. All roads back to college lead through testing. The availability of widespread testing will allow colleges to track and isolate students who have the virus or have been exposed to it, so the rest of the student body doesn’t have to be quarantined.

We know that a single lost year of college can lead to a student not graduating from college and set back career goals. Already, disruption of university research projects has erased much of the progress that was being made with the record levels of research funding Congress has provided over the past five years. Many American colleges—overall considered the best in the world—will be permanently damaged or even closed if they remain, in witness Christina Paxson’s words, ‘ghost towns.’ Two thirds of college students want to return to campus, according to an Axios survey.

Committee Ranking Member Patty Murray (D-WA) [Full Statement]
As we look at the dramatic impact COVID-19 is having on institutions of higher education and discuss ways to keep students, faculty, and staff safe, we absolutely have to address the unique impact this virus has on Black students and other students of color... We have already seen that communities of color, tribes, and other vulnerable populations face some of the harshest impacts from this pandemic. It is our job to ensure that the students who have been, and will continue to be, disproportionately impacted by COVID-19, don’t see their education suffer or fall behind.

Our students, faculty, staff and college communities need to know that before colleges reopen their doors, they’ve planned for, every potential outcome, every contributing factor, and every scenario. But colleges and universities can’t do this alone.

Witness Testimony
Mr. Mitchell Daniels, President, Purdue University [Full Testimony]
Dr. Christina Paxson, President, Brown University [Full Testimony]
Dr. Logan Hampton, President, Lane College [Full Testimony]
Alexander: Thank you, Dr. Benjamin. And, thanks to all the witnesses. We'll now begin a round of five-minute questions, from Senators. And, I would ask the Senators and the witnesses, to try to keep your answers, within 5 minutes, because all the Senators would like to be—participate. And, we have a vote, a little bit before noon. President Daniels, let me start with you.

Let me ask about, how much advice you want from Washington, in order to go back to school safely? For example, do you think Washington D.C., the president, or the Congress, ought to tell you, that you cannot open, in person, or should tell the University of California system, that it has to open, in person?

Daniels: I guess they'd be within their legal rights, but I hope not. You know, that as every student is different, we try to remind ourselves of that, every school in the country, is unique in some way. And, I thought your admonition, at the beginning, Mr. Chairman was—was on target. I know that others will find better answers than we had, and I hope they'll be free to do that, so we can copy them.

Alexander: Dr. Paxson, in an article you wrote, that you want to test every student, the CDC has not recommended that, yet. Other universities have said, that's not practical. Do you think—how much advice, do you want, from the President or Congress, about how many students you should test, and how you should do the testing?

Paxson: Well, I—I think of the CDC guidelines, as minimum standards. Talking to my people, my members of my medical school, as well as, parents and students, and faculty. They—they want testing, they want everybody to be tested. And then, we want to do surveillance testing, on a regular basis, throughout the year. It's both peace of mind, but also being able to monitor the spread of infection. I think it's essential.

Alexander: Let me ask President Daniel, and the other presidents this question, you know, one of the opportunities we have, in this crisis, is to learn from it. We've compressed about 10 years of experience, into three months, in terms of at least two things; one is, telelearning. What have we learned from that?

And, the two is the use of space. As I mentioned in my comments, colleges are the most notorious wasters of space, in America, I would think. Classes aren't usually taught, in the morning or the evening, or on Saturday. And, is it possible, that as a result of the requirement of social distancing, that a year experience of teaching classes, at different times, and the more efficient use of space, would have some sort of lasting impact? What about the lasting impact too, of what you've learned about, telelearning? Let me start, with President Daniels.

Daniels: Yes, of course, there will be lasting effects of this. And, I think, highly beneficial. Now, space utilization has been an issue with us, at Purdue, for some time. And, and, I hope we've been using it better. There's nothing unusual, about Saturday classes, or evening classes here. But, clearly, we can do better, and will, now.

Yes, we're going to—when you reduce occupancy, of our classrooms, to 50 percent or less, by definition, you have to use time and space, in ways that you weren't before. I think I made mention that, we now learn so
much, about telework, that at least a third of our employees, our staff, will now be asked and enabled, to work from home, on a either a constant basis or at least on a rotating basis. That takes them out of harm's way, and that's going to free up a lot of space that, maybe we can find creative ways--uses for.

ALEXANDER:

Dr. Paxson?

PAXSON:

So, yes. We're all learning a lot. And, I appreciate your question. Just a couple things that we're learning, to add to what President Daniel said. One is that you know, the shift to remote learning, students learned. And, there were many valuable lessons there. I think in the future, we may do more flipped classrooms, where large lectures, are not done in person.

That's a great thing. Another related area, that's very important, is to use of telemedicine. And, we discovered, especially for counseling and psychological services, when students are in states that we can work with, and there's some bureaucracy around that, it's actually an incredibly efficient and valuable way, to support our students.

ALEXANDER:

Dr. Hampton, have you learned anything, in these three months, about the use of space, that might be a lasting lesson, at Lane College?

HAMPTON:

Yes, sir. Mr. Chairman, we--we surely learned that our faculty, and our institution that was committed, to residential instruction, could very agilely move, to remote instruction. We remove every single course, to remote instruction, in the spring. And, for us, that was, that was absolutely, monumental.

I do want to go back, and just, just say, to your initial question. That yes, in fact, Lane College will be open, in the fall. But what we need, is we need your investment. We need that one billion dollars. The greater higher arc education communities asked for $46 billion dollars. We need a partnership, from the federal government, to help us, to ensure, that we have the standards, we have the facilities, in place, to protect our students, to educate them safely, and to deliver on our mission.

ALEXANDER:

Okay, thank you, Dr. Hampton. Senator Murray.

MURRAY:

Well, thank you, very much, Mr. Chairman. If we're gonna safely reopen, public health has to drive decision making. And, according to our public health experts, that includes making sure students and staff, have access to testing, the ability to safely quarantine, if they are exposed to the virus, and support for isolation, and access to medical care, if they get sick.

Students and staff need to be able to participate in their classes, while also following public health advice, to social distance, wear face masks, and keep themselves and their families healthy. But public health experts agree, we are not anywhere close, right now, to meeting adequate levels.

(INAUDIBLE)

UNKNOWN:
I can't do it today, but tomorrow, next week. Yeah, we need to go ahead and get that planned. But the other thing is, I don't know about Thursdays, for him. We need to just--

MURRAY:

Alright, I think somebody's--somebody doesn't--is not muted. Is everybody else hearing that?

UNKNOWN:

Maybe just check with Rick. My schedule too? And if we need to, he may have, he may be tied up, Thursday. If that's the case, we probably ought to just do--

MURRAY:

Mr. Chairman, I think one of the--if the staff can mute him, that would be great. But Dr. Benjamin, let me just direct this to you; if our country remains at current levels of testing, are colleges going to be able to keep students and employees and their communities, safe?

BENJAMIN:

Testing has always been the key to success here. You know, we finally at about 400,000 test per day. We're not nearly at the 500,000, that we need to be. And, every state is a little different. I just looked at a chart today, that shows a huge variety of states, that are, not yet, there yet. I think it will be a real challenge, if--if we can't get to that, bare minimum 500,000 per day. And, you may know, there's several groups, like the Rockefeller Foundation, believe that we should go to, two to three times that amount, per day.

MURRAY:

Okay. You know, I've heard it said that COVID-19 is a quote, great equalizer. But we actually know, in terms of the viruses health and economic impacts, nothing could be actually further from the truth; with black communities, and communities of color, being at much greater risk of getting sick and dying, and--and have fallen behind, economically, because of the pandemic, itself.

Colleges, determining how to reopen, have to consider those inequities and selecting the best course of action, for both students and the staff. So, I wanted to ask each of our presidents, maybe in this order, Presidents' Daniels, Paxson, and Hampton. How, specifically, are you each planning to address, the alarming health disparities, impacting our communities of colors, as you think about reopening? And, I'll start with President Daniels.

DANIELS:

One thing that I'm very worried about is that, the efforts we've made, and as far as I know, every University College and University has made, to successfully recruit and then, just as important, see through to successful graduation; low income, first-generation, and minority students. The--we've all been making, every effort, we know how, now, for some time. And, I do worry that these are about to be set back, by the tragic factors, that you just mentioned.

I'm tentatively encouraged, that as our deposits came--have come in, that are URM percentage seems to have held up. I was really worried Senator, that it might put back, but maybe not. But I do worry that our progress, will be arrested. And, that, we're going to have, we will certainly pay special attention, again, to identifying those who might be vulnerable.
That's mainly faculty and staff, but yes, as Dr. Benjamin pointed out, there are some young people, who have these comorbidities, that will put them, very much in our sights, for special attention. And, I'm--I'm sure you're probably right, that, minorities may well be disproportionately represented, in that group.

MURRAY:

They are, yes. Well, President Paxson.

PAXSON:

Thank you, for the question. And, you know, I've spent my life studying health disparities, and economic disparities. And, you know, when I look at it, issues of inequity, are one of the major reasons, why we should open colleges and universities, or places that create level playing fields, for students.

And, we can ensure that all students have equal access to education, the quality will be the same, and health services will be the same, for all students, regardless. So, I--it's one of the major reasons why I want to get students back.

MURRAY:

President Hampton?

HAMPTON:

Yes, Senator Murray. No doubt about it, race, racism, and health, disproportionately, impact our institution, Lane College. To overcome these barriers, I mean, we need--we need the help, of the federal government. Yes, we need your guidelines. But we also need your investment. Our students need your investment. Our students need more monies, to attend colleges and universities.

Doubling that Pell would help to ameliorate some of those challenges, that their families are having, right at this very moment, as they are losing their jobs, as they are being laid off, as a result of COVID-19, and the other impacts of racism. Those students, our students, my students need an additional investment, doubling Pell Grant, will go a long way, to helping them, to afford, institution of higher learning.

MURRAY:

Okay. Thank you, for bringing that up. In addition, to the disparities, I just talked about, there is a disparity of resources, among colleges, as well. And, we need to address that. So, thank you, very much, for that answer. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

ALEXANDER:

Senator, your time got interfered with, if you have another question, then go ahead. Alright, we will go to Senator Collins.

COLLINS:

Thank you, Mr. Chairman. This hearing is incredibly timely, because just this morning, the University of Maine, and other college Presidents, issued a document, called Sustaining Higher Education and Sustaining Maine. So, I know that they are watching this hearing, with great interest. My first question is for President Daniels; colleges and universities are economic engines for their communities and their states.

In addition to educating students, they employ thousands of people, administrative staff, food service workers, custodians, faculty advisors, student workers, when the campuses closed to, in-person instruction, this had a great impact in Maine, on many, hourly workers, in particular. The University of Maine system employs nearly
4800 employees. My question is this, should there be different testing protocols, for employees who are going back and forth, into their communities, and then back to campus, then for students, who are living full-time, on campus? Are you looking at that?

DANIELS:

That's an excellent question, senator, thank you. Yes, we are. It was observed that at many schools, and we are one; half of our students also live off-campus. Now, many of them are very close by. We're going to be working, very closely, with the--their landlords and others, trying to make certain that, they're following the same practices, that we will, in the--in the housing, that we administer. I'll just say that it's been very sad to read about, so many furloughs, layoffs of staff, and faculty, at other schools.

We haven't done that at Purdue, and intend to, not to do that, if at any way possible. But it is--it is a significant issue, you know, our principle responsibility is to our students, and to our university community. But we're very conscious, as you said, that we are, an economic driver that many other people, in the community around us, do rely. And so, our responsibilities to them both from health safety standpoint, and from an operation on economic standpoint, we try never to lose sight of.

COLLINS:

Thank you. Dr. Paxson and Dr. Hampton, in Maine more than 7400 students are served by the TRIO programs. And, I've always been a very strong supporter of those programs, because we have a great number of 1st generation college students, in my state. I'm very worried, that if colleges do not reopen, this fall, that we're going to increase the number of people who have some college, but no degree.

And, they end up with student debt, but no credential, to help them pay off that debt. What do you think of expanding programs, like TRIO, to make sure that the student's supports are there, to encourage students, to come back to school, and to complete their degree, or earn their credential, if they're attending a Community College?

PAXSON:

Thank you, you--and--the TRIO program is a marvelous program. And, I am fully and supportive of bringing our lowest-income students, and our first Gen students, back to campus. And, not just at Brown, but nationally, as it should be a national priority. I am also concerned that, without increases in financial aid, and actually, I agree with--one of--my other speakers, on this call, that, you know, doubling the Pell Grant, would be a great thing to do.

These students, if they don't come back, if they defer, if they delay, they may never come back. And, they may not, get their degrees. Another related issue, which is--which is, I think even more alarming, is if colleges and universities, have to close permanently, they have a lot of students who are going to be halfway through degrees, and finding another institution to complete their degrees, may be very difficult. So, we need to keep a close eye on, persistence in education, and degree completion. Especially, during this time.

COLLINS:

Thank you. Dr. Hampton.

HAMPTON:

Senator, I absolutely support, the TRIO program. Lane College was a strong provider of the Upward Bound Program, and in the most recent round of competition, Lane College lost out by one point. We were one point, out of the funding band. That's 50 to 100 students, that's 5 or 6 faculty staff members, who we--we lost, and have not been able to provide services for.
While I absolutely support, and expansion of the TRIO program, Lane College is in each Jackson it's a--it's an economic, it's a donut, Lane College is a $36 million engine, in this area. To have a strong Lane College, means they have a strong Jackson and a strong, West Tennessee. And so, I would very much support expanding TRIO program, and getting Upward Bound, back at Lane College.

COLLINS:

Thank you.

ALEXANDER:

Thank you, Senator Collins. Senator Casey.

CASEY:

Mr. Chairman, thank you, very much, for the hearing. I want to thank you, and Ranking Member Murray, for calling this hearing. I want to thank, our three college presidents, and Dr. Benjamin, for their appearance, as well as, their testimony. It's very informative for us who have higher education institutions, in our state, to have this hearing.

And, I would just note at the outset, that the pleas for help, that higher education institutions have brought to Capitol Hill; including some this morning, should be mindful, all presidents should be mindful, that right now, as we speak, at the beginning of June, there is no prospect for legislation, right now, that's-- that's related to COVID-19, in the month of June.

I hope that changes, but right now, the United States Senate is only doing nominations. I hope you would bring some pressure to bear, on the majority, to begin to negotiate, a new piece of legislation, that would address a range of issues, including support for higher education, especially for students. But, let me start with the question of how students will respond, to the change of circumstances, in college campuses?

Student compliance, with social distancing or enhanced safety protocols, or other measures, obviously, are the key to reopening safely. You've, you know that you said that, you're living that, now. There's going to be substantial enforcement challenges, as you know. Especially, when students are, not only on campus but engaging with or interacting with, members of the community, for various reasons.

So, that's one of the concerns, obviously, and you all understand this, is the risk of spread within a community, asymptomatic transmission, especially. So, I got three questions, for the President and I hope I can get a question in, to Dr. Benjamin. Number one is, what are the protocols that you're using?

And, I know you've outlined some of those, some of this will be by repetition. Number two is, how you enforce those protocols? And, number three is, how are you engaging with students, right now, or have you already engaged, to review and to make certain, what those protocols will be, and the enforcement? So, in protocols, enforcement, and then engagement. Maybe we can just go in alphabetical order, to President Daniels.

DANIELS:

Thank you, senator. Protocols are essentially about distance, about masking, about monitoring one's own system, the pledge I talked about, the--monitoring one's own symptoms, reporting right away, for testing, it anything suspected, all of that. I would say, in terms of enforcement, yes.

So, I--I really think that the most important thing we can do is, foster a culture, I'm hopeful about this, on our campus, we're going to appeal to student's altruism. I see it every day, long before COVID came along; young people; an overwhelming number; want to do good things. They want to help others. Well, here's the--here's a chance, in a huge way. We're also, I'm frankly going to tell them; there are a lot of cynics out there, who don't
believe you'll do this, they think you're too selfish and too self-indulgent. So, let's go show them, how much you do care, about your fellow human beings, young and old.

Lastly, I would just say that this is the central question, I believe the most important one; if we do all the other things we've talked about, and don't have reasonable compliance, we probably don't make it, and vice versa. Very interesting study out of Hong Kong showed that simply reaching 80 percent compliance, with masking, stops the spread of infection, lowers the--our number below one. So, this is really is very central. I'm hopeful. But we're going to do everything, all summer long, and all fall, to--to try to foster it.

CASEY:

Thank you, Dr. Hampton.

HAMPTON:

Yes, Sir. Senator Casey, we have some practice with this, this spring. When we went to remote instruction, and we had about 200 students, that remained on campus. And, we began to practice the CDC guidelines. And, we had a group of students, who decided to have a party. And, they took pictures and posted it.

Well, let me just say, they had very good conversations, with the dean of Students, following that. And so, I have every confidence, in our student body, that was after that, our student body practiced, those 200 students, they practiced going to the cafeteria, getting their lunch, going back to their rooms. They practiced social distancing, they did operate in pods, though. Where you see a group of students moving around together.

CASEY:

Thanks, so much, Dr. Paxson.

PAXSON:

Thank you, and I can add, I--I think it's very important that the protocols that students have to follow are one; crystal clear, not ambiguous, not overly complicated, but grounded, in public health rules. That there is an expectation, that a violation of those protocols, is a violation of our student code of conduct. And so, they are enforceable.

And, you know, ideally, though, you don't do this through enforcement of rules, you do it through changing culture, and developing a set of norms, where students understand that, they're protecting themselves, but they're protecting their fellow students, their faculty members, people who they respect and love. And, if we can get that message through, I'm very confident that we'll do well.

ALEXANDER:

Thank you, Senator Casey. Wait.

CASEY:

I think I'll submit a question for the record to Dr. Benjamin. I know we gotta go. Thank you.

ALEXANDER:

Sorry, Senator Casey. Senator Murkowski.

MURKOWSKI:
Mr. Chairman, thank you. Thank you, for your leadership, in your respective schools, and the leadership that you are showing, as you're guiding your students, and your faculty, through very, very, challenging, and uncharted times. We worked hard within the CARES Act, to try to ensure that we were able to get direct relief out, quickly. Quickly to--to small businesses, quickly to our schools, quickly to the individuals, through direct assistance. And, as I look back through CARES, it seems to me that one--one group, that kind of got missed, were students.

Those who are over 16 and were not dependent, on their parents, were not able to receive direct assistance, parents weren't able to receive it, on their behalf. Many times, not eligible for--for unemployment insurance. So, when I think about--about the impact to the students, at the time, there literally, in Alaska's specific case, a spring break is underway, and they get the word, don't come back after spring break.

And, the University of Alaska's situation, what they were able to do, was provide financial assistance, to many students, from everything from; ensuring that they had transportation back to their homes, shipping their belongings back, or--or emergency funds. And, I know that tuition costs, in many institutions, have been refunded. But to what extent, have we been able to--to make our students, whole, in terms of--of the costs, that they incurred?

As we know, most students don't have a lot of disposable income out there, where--where they've got, they've got money, in savings, that they can pick this up. Were you able to fully reimburse your students, for their costs, due to whether it's unexpected travel, with housing, the lost classes, to what extent, were you able to provide that relief, to your students? And, we'll just start with you, President Daniels, and go down the line.

DANIELS:

I can't say it was fully. I'm sure it wasn't. As probably it wasn't, in many other contexts, around the country. But I hope it was adequate. We did refund a very substantial percentage of certain fees, housing costs, and so forth. And, we had an emergency fund, which we augmented, and came to the specific relief of students, who made application.

And, we're having exactly the kind of troubles, that you're having. I'm very attentive though, watching for this fall, we've increased our financial aid, to the extent we could. And, we'll just have--we'll learn a lot more, in the next few weeks, about whether students; pre-existing and our incoming, aspiring freshmen, are--have been prevented, by financial exigency, from doing what they are very eager to do.

MURKOWSKI:

President Paxson.

PAXSON:

Thank you. So, like other schools, we really pulled out all the stops, trying to support our students, or our highest need students, as they transitioned home; travel, laptops, Wi-Fi, books, you know, etc., etc. And, I think that was fairly successful. What we found though, is that the needs are continuing, and in some ways, growing.

As unemployment has increased, students' families are losing their jobs, student summer jobs have been--they have evaporated. There's nothing for students to do, this summer. And so, while we're doing all we can, to try to find them alternative things, and things for pay, over the summer; it's very, very, hard to meet that full need. We have waived, the expectation that students will save money, over the summer, to meet part of their tuition, in the coming year. But we're getting request for help, with food, that's--that's where we are.

MURKOWSKI:

Yeah, Dr. Hampton.
HAMPTON:

Yes, we were able to use, the student portion, of the CARES Act and distributed that, straight, directly to the students, bank mobile accounts. And, we were able to do that on April 30th, 78 percent of our students communicated to us, that they needed assistance, with food, 73 percent of our students indicated they needed assistance with housing.

And so, we prorated the amount for food and housing, and we also added in some support, for transportation. And, we distributed those funds, directly to those students. Now, we are using the funds to help students, to return-- to return to college. And, to support their educational needs, or any number of things, for food, for housing, for digital supplies, with digital resource, for hotspots. We are supporting those students, on a case by case, basis.

MURKOWSKI:

Thank you. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

ALEXANDER:

Thank you, Senator Murkowski. We have seven senators remaining and everybody's doing a good job, of staying within 5 minutes, which I thank you for. Senator Baldwin.

BALDWIN:

I thank you, Mr. Chairman. I--I wanted to ask a couple of questions first to Dr. Benjamin. Dr. Benjamin, you stated in your testimony, that every school, all schools, should be prepared to have at least one case of COVID-19, on campus. Last week, I learned from the University of Wisconsin, Madison, that they had run out of the reagents, needed to run one of its testing platforms.

And, despite continuous calls for support, from the administration. The administration essentially said that private labs, need to rely on existing supply chains, for things like reagent. Can you describe why schools need to have all of the supplies on hand, not just the testing platforms, but testing supplies, in order to respond to, the very high likelihood of new cases?

BENJAMIN:

You know, the challenge, of course, you have, is that it--you gonna have a case. You know, and you're gonna have to test someone. If you don't have the capacity within your own campus health program, you're gonna have to set up a strong linkage to someone else, that does. The biggest challenge we've had with all of this testing, of frankly, fundamentally, has been the supply line issue.

And, it's going to require some partnerships, it's going to require, on a daily basis, making sure that you have adequate testing capacity. And, just 'cause--it's going to happen, and it's gonna-- it's gonna--and the way things work in the world, as you know, a case comes in, and the test isn't available. And, then all of this sequela (PH) that may occur after that, which are problems, as a direct result of our inability to test. So, they're going to have to have adequate testing, otherwise, we can't function, at all.

BALDWIN:

Yeah. Thank you, I--I have a second question for you. I know that in some of the testimony by both senators and our witness panel, there were references to the--the fact that most of the severe health outcomes, from the coronavirus, are among older people. And so, I certainly--students and in the typical student undergraduate age range, I--are predicted to be more healthy.
But I want to just consider several things, as we move forward to seeing more campuses reopen. According to the American Federation of Teachers, the 40 percent of adjunct or contingent faculty who comprise 75 percent of total instructional staff, are over the age of 60. And, I'm also thinking a lot about our technical and vocational colleges, that will probably, during a time of excessively high unemployment, see a new age demographic, beyond what they've already--already seen, as a result of the Great Recession.

And so, I--I'm very concerned about, not only the safety and health of undergraduate students but also, faculty and the staff that work on our campuses. I'm confident that the colleges and universities want to do the right thing. But they need very clear, rules of the road. And, workers need to know that they are protected. It's why I worked with several of my colleagues to introduce the Every Worker Protection Act, which actually requires the Occupational Safety and Health Administration, to issue emergency temporary standards, that cover all workers, and workplaces.

And, requires workplaces to implement infectious disease exposure control plans, to keep their workers safe. You stated in your testimony that OSHA needs to promulgate such a standard. Do you agree it's important, for the safety of faculty and staff, as well as, students they serve, that such a standard, not a voluntary guidance, but a standard, being in place, before colleges and universities, move to reopen, this fall?

BENJAMIN:

You know, I've been running big organizations, on and off, for a long time. And, unless you have standards, that everybody can rely on, you're not going to get anywhere. So, standards are actually important, to protect workers. Because, they create, frankly, a floor, that everybody can rely on. It doesn't mean you can't do more than that, but I've always argued that those kinds of standards, are absolutely essential, they reduce a whole range of your risk. And so, I would also agree, with your statement, senator.

BALDWIN:

Thank you.

ALEXANDER:

Thank you, very much, Senator Baldwin. Senator Cassidy.

CASSIDY:

Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I want to thank university presidents, for thinking creatively, about reopening, the school. Dr. Benjamin correctly points out, that even though you’re less than 25, you have less risk. The risk is not zero, of health effects. But what we do know is that, if you miss out on critical years of education, it's an absolute, 100 percent risk, that your future economic prospects are minimized.

And, President Paxson, I am struck by what you said. So far, CDC recommendations seem to be the kind of minimum standard; they're not actually, kind of what we would really like. Dr. Benjamin, first going to you, knowing that the federal government has been slow, coming out with testing strategies, for settings like universities, and that, what they do at Lane, is going to be different, than what they do at Brown, different than what they do at Purdue, or at Louisiana State University or Tulane; just because of different sizes of schools.

Is your organization promulgating or suggesting, different strategies, so that, someone like President Hampton, God bless him, is able to get his university reopened? And, with kind of a strategy about, how to use the testing, which is available?

BENJAMIN:

We're not specifically developing standards, we are encouraging schools and others, to develop learning collaborators. So that, they can learn from one--
CASSIDY:

Well, I'll pause you, just 'cause I just have such minimal time. I do think it's important to have a strategy. I think it's important for the federal government. I think it's important for others. President Paxson, it appears that you have put together a strategy.

I just wanna explore that a little bit 'cause I think you would inform others. We understand that if--if you have an outbreak, in a particular dormitory, and it's not in other dormitories, intuitively you would devote resources, to the folks in that dormitory. Is--is that the beginning of your approach, or how would you say that?

PAXSON:

Yes, so, you know, the optimal testing strategy, is something we're working on really carefully. We have epidemiologists, and it's going to be data-informed, and it's going to change over time. It depends on prevalence, in the local area. But certainly, one of the components would be, if there was a student, who tested positive, their dormitory, their classmates, would be people who, doing standard contract--chasing protocols, would be people, who would be tested next.

CASSIDY:

Now, let me ask you. One thing we've been interested in because there might be a limitation on the number of tests available; is the ability to batch test, to do, you know, 100 in a dorm, but if it tests positive, then you do each individual. Is that part of your strategy?

PAXSON:

Well, we're exploring that. And, that's something that's still relatively new, very much in development. Batch testing looks promising, as does wastewater testing. Where you can test, stuff coming out of the dorms, and figure out if anybody in the dorm, has it. So, we're exploring those options.

CASSIDY:

You're very delicate when you say 'stuff' coming out of the dorm. President Hampton, as you put together your strategy, these folks got medical schools. Again, God bless you--you--you--you are a, much more constrained, in terms of resources. Where are you developing, your testing strategy from?

And, what could be done, to help you or those similarly situated, my historically black colleges and universities, in Louisiana, for example, to implement such a strategy; knowing that your student body, may have an increased incidence of those comorbid conditions, which increase risk?

HAMPTON:

Well, I began with, number one, make the investment, in our institutions. Make that one-billion-dollar investment, in the historically black college, University of tribal colleges, MSI's. And, the $46 billion dollars in--in the greater--greater body. Make that investment. We had a little bit of practice with this, this--this past spring. We implemented protocols where a student would present, in, student presented in our health services, and that student was tested for--for flu, and other, and they were--they were screened.

And, we had one--one incident on our campus, in the spring, with students who remained on campus, where a student was--had come in contact with the person, and we were able to isolate that person, into an apartment complex, allow that person to go through those 14 days, and then have that person to--to not show any symptoms of those--

CASSIDY:
But let me ask you because I'm almost out of time. The strategy that President Paxson has put together, where, you know, you made new wastewater, or but, you certainly have a micro-community, within your campus, with upon, whom you're focusing. Because, they've shown to be positive, or at least one person, within them. Do y'all have a similar set of protocols? Or would it benefit you, for those to be promulgated by some organizations, such as the CDC or another public health organization?

HAMPTON:

It would, in fact, benefit us to have those promulgated. But, we do in fact, have partnerships with our Madison County Health--health Department, with our Christ Community Health Department, our Health Center, to be able to do testing, for our--for any of our students, are in our public, who believe that they have some-- or who may show some symptoms that they'll be able to go get tested and get their results back, in 24 hours.

CASSIDY:

Got you, thank you. I yield back. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

ALEXANDER:

Thank you, Dr. Cassidy. Senator Murphy.

MURPHY:

Thank you, very much, Mr. Chairman. Thank you, all. This has been incredibly helpful, for all of us. Mr. Chairman, I want college sports to come back. I want sports, in general, to come back. I miss it. For me, it's a release, from this job. And, I can't wait. At the same time, I wanted to come back, for the right reasons. And, I want it to come back, safely.

And so, I wanted to ask a series of questions, on this topic, because I think it's important. Maybe I'll start with you, Mr. Daniels. I think it's interesting, that college sports teams are coming back for practices, before professional sports leagues are feeling that it's safe enough, to come back. And, well, I've read through what your university is doing, to try to protect students, that are returning; these are contact sports, there's no way, ultimately, to have social distancing, for a football team or a soccer team.

And so, what happens if you have an outbreak, over the course of summer, training, or in the early fall, on the football team, or on your women's soccer team? What's your protocol? Do you shut that team down? Do they stop playing the season? Do you just segment off, the players who have tested positive? This is a potential for a super spreading environment if you're not careful.

DANIELS:

I completely agree with you. I think you would shut it down. And, I think that we will all--somewhere out there, someone may very well, face this--this situation. Our--our teams are resuming individual workouts, later than some, but they are coming back to that. There--then group workouts, the conference we belong to, has--has prescribed some guidelines.

And, we will follow them. And, in some cases, exceed them. But I think you're quite right, and we--we love sports too, but first things first. And, that starts with safety of people, players, coaches, don't forget that people who may be at most risks, of a spread here, are the older folks, the coaches and others. So, I hope we get back, but if it takes longer or if it is subject to interruption, then so be it.

MURPHY:
Let me ask you one specific question if I could drill down. What happens if you've got a scholarship player, who doesn't feel comfortable, coming back? Let's say they've got a mother at home, or a grandfather, that's got medical complications, if they decide not to play football this year, because they just don't think it's right for them, do they maintain their scholarship?

DANIELS:

Yes, they would. We--we've honored scholarships, at Purdue, for a long time, for people who couldn't play for--or continue for some reason; could be injury or some personal tragedy. So, that would not--that would be consistent, with our policy. And, I think I can speak with the authority, for our athletic department, that we would see that as the right thing to do. And, the thing we would--we ought to do.

MURPHY:

I--I--I appreciate that. I will note that that is not, right now, the standard for all NCAA schools. And, I think it would be important for us, to make sure, it is. And then, lastly, and maybe most importantly, what are you going to do about attendance, at sporting events, this fall? Because that's what I really worry about. You have the Iowa athletic director, on the record, he's a member of your conference, saying that, right now, his plan is to let everybody into the football stadium.

And, anybody who wants to come watch, can. You know we had a situation, in Westport Connecticut, before this was an epidemic, where 50 people got together for a birthday party. One person had coronavirus, one of the first, in the northeast, to have it. At the end of that party, half of them had it.

And, the virus was off and running, on the East Coast. So, it worries me, that we are contemplating, putting hundreds of thousands of adults and students, into stadiums. Especially, when the professional sports leagues, don't seem to be entertaining that idea. What's your understanding, today? Are we going to have, fans in stadiums, for events in your conference, this fall?

DANIELS:

I can't speak for any others, but we are not looking at going beyond 1/4 of the capacity of our 57,000 stadia, right now. This has been mapped out, just as we have mapped out classrooms, and--and dorm rooms, to measure distance and then exceed the requirements. We would be doing that, too.

So, it comes out to about it 1/4 on the work we've done. Now, we know that outdoors is very different, that it is very hard to spread this outdoors, but we're still gonna take an abundance of caution, approach. I cannot tell you about indoor sports. Right now, I don't think I see a way, that we can proceed, on anything, like the basis, that we've all been familiar with.

MURPHY:

I--I appreciate that that's still, you know, 10 to 20,000 people, altogether, for an event. So, I think that may be a pretty dangerous endeavor, and I think it's interesting, compared to professional sports, who have decided to make a different decision. I think it's a topic worth continuing to talk about. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

ALEXANDER:

Thank you, Senator Murphy. Senator Warren.

WARREN:

Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I want to start, if I can, by quickly thanking, Ranking Member Murray, for her comments, acknowledging what's happening, in our country. We can't ignore the racist violence, that has killed George Floyd, and Imad Aubrey, and Breonna Taylor and so, many, many, others. We must commit ourselves,
to change. And, using this committee, as well as, others, to advance any racist policies, in health, in education, and for workers, including today's hearing, about reopening colleges.

You know, millions of families, millions of students, across this country, are wondering, when and how colleges are going to safely reopen. And, I know this is a hard question, that's going to vary from campus to campus. But, President Daniels, you wrote a recent op edage, titled Why failing to reopen Purdue University this fall, would be an unacceptable breach of duty. So, your op-ed makes it sound like you have already decided, that you're going to reopen them, no matter what, come this fall.

And, in that op-ed, you discuss how you're going to mitigate risks, to undergraduate students, but I noticed there's almost no discussion, of addressing risks, to workers or faculty, who tend to be older, and more at risk. Nothing about the risk to low-wage workers, or hourly workers, workers who are often black or brown. These workers are responsible for serving the food in the dining halls, and cleaning the dorms and classrooms, and keeping your campus running.

They are particularly vulnerable, and they have the least power and they are getting sick, at disproportionate rates. So, President Daniels, Purdue has nearly 17,000 employees, nearly half are staff who won't be able to work normally, this fall. They might get sick, they might need to care for a loved one, they might have small children that need care, or because of their age, or preexisting health conditions; they may not feel safe, coming onto a college campus, during a pandemic.

So, I just want to know, have you laid out, publicly, a plan for these workers?

DANIELS:

Well, thank you, senator.

WARREN:

Well, let me just ask specifically, if you agree to continue paying them, if they can't come to work, or if they decide, it's too risky, to show up for work?

DANIELS:

Well, thank you, I'm so glad you asked the question, 'cause, first of all, you could not have better expressed our entire philosophy and strategy. I don't know if you were here for the opening presentation, but I enunciated it then. And, our entire strategy is built around, the protection of the vulnerable. And, that starts with faculty and staff. Starting next week, we will have, one to one visit, with our faculty, to try to figure out, what they're--we have a grid that attempts to estimate their degree of vulnerability. There's some we don't want near campus, at all. There are others, we will make an accommodation for. But--

WARREN:

So, if I could just understand, I'm sorry, I'm just going to be limited on time. If I could just understand, you haven't put out a plan, publicly, yet? It sounds like you haven't worked one out. But you're planning to work it out, one on one, with your employees. Is that right?

DANIELS:

Our plan is entirely based on the protection of the vulnerable. And, that will include, trying to make individual accommodations, for those about whom we have the most concern. As I mentioned about a third of our staff--

WARREN:
Okay. Let me just say on this, I was asking about whether or not, you'd already laid out a plan. And, I take the answer on that, is no. Because I'm--

DANIELS:

No. The answer, of course, is yes. It's very comprehensive, and I'd be happy to repeat it if you need it.

WARREN:

I just hadn't seen it, publicly. I just hadn't seen this plan, laid out. Because my question is really about, who has power, and who has a voice, in these decisions? You know, best practices are best practices; only if everyone, is at the table, who's going to be affected when those plans are being laid out.

So, I just want to move on, for the time being, but I'll follow up in writing, to try to get public commitments, that going forward, you're going to include, both faculty and staff, at the table. And, they're going to explain about how this is going to intersect, with their pay, and how you safely reopen this campus. Dr. Paxson, I want to stay on the topic of power and accountability.

In addition to being the President of Brown University, you're also the Vice-Chair of the Board for the Association of American Universities, which signed a letter last week, from the American Council on Education, which is the very powerful college lobby, urging Congress to quote, "quickly enact temporary COVID-19 related liability protections, for higher education institutions and systems."

Now, Dr. Paxson, as you know, current law imposes liability, only when the college has behaved unreasonably, under all the circumstances. The law does not impose, automatic liability, when somebody gets sick, or even when somebody dies. Instead, it's a liability, only when, for example, in a pandemic, a college doesn't take reasonable efforts, to clean up common spaces, or to separate, desperately sick students.

So, when colleges lobby to change that standard, and to walk away, from it, even if they are extraordinarily careless, with the lives of their students, even if these colleges take completely unreasonable risks, even if someone dies, what message does it send to our families, and our students? You know, would it make you, more comfortable, or less comfortable, as the parent of an incoming student?

ALEXANDER:

Dr. Paxson, we're well over time, but you take whatever time you need, to answer that question.

PAXSON:

Thank you, very much. I--I do not want protection, from being careless. That is not what we're about. And, if we're careless, if we don't follow guidelines, that's, that's something that should not be protected, in any way, shape, or form. The fact is though, we are in, a brand-new pandemic. We've never seen this before. We're in uncharted territory.

I think many institutions are very nervous, that even if they play by the rules, scrupulously, that they will still be subject to class action lawsuits, lawsuits they'll probably prevail if they've done them right. But the cost of defending those lawsuits will take money away from, tuition, financial aid, not from tuition from financial aid, and all of the support that we provide, for our students. So, I--I am in favor of a very carefully crafted, liability protection, that did, no way, shape, or form, permits us, to be careless, with people's lives.
Well, I appreciate that. I know we are over, but if I can, I just want to ask unanimous consent, Mr. Chairman, to enter statements for the record, on this issue, from Americans for Financial Reform, the Student Borrower Protection Center, Public Citizen, American Association for Justice and Georgetown Law Professor David Vladek of-- you know, the public should know, that a college, just like any institution, has to behave reasonably. That's what the law requires. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

ALEXANDER:


BRAUN:

Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I'm going to lead in, with Senator Warren's question. And, I think it's a valid one to ask, in the sense that, the safety of your employees, staff at universities, as well as, your customers, which would be the students, very important. But, underlying the way she phrased that question, would be that, it's not in the extreme interest, of the University, of businesses across this country, to keep not only your customers safe, your employees, as well.

It also, to me, by the way, it was stated, assumes that there's not going to be the agility and the ability, to do both of them. And, my question is going to be for President Daniels, and you can continue a response if you want to. But, I think, rest assured, for the people that run the real economy, including teaching our students, they have in their own best interest, to do all of the things, this kind of bureaucratic approach has been to where its, tamped down economies, maybe unnecessarily, we're able to do, two things at once.

And, I think that argument, that you cannot operate, safely and keep the disease at bay, might have been an underlying strategic error in how we've addressed it, in the first place. So, President Daniels, as an entrepreneur, sometimes your plans don't work out, the way you might hope, they will. I know I'm building a business over 37 years, if things were growing great, in the moment. I said hey, something is gonna come along, to maybe try to derail it.

Had the data not shown you, or if something should change, where you bring students back to school, and I think everything you've laid out, makes it sound like a great plan; let's say, if not, how does your involvement with, online education, I think you call it Purdue Global, would that have been a backup plan, that would have come into play, for your students, that would want to attend, on campus? Tell me a little bit about that. And then, more broadly, how you think that part of postsecondary education, might break the cost curve, that's been so tough to do, with traditional education, on campus?

DANIELS:

Senator, Purdue Global is a separate branch of our University, it serves a very different clientele. The typical student there, is a 33-year-old woman, with a job, and usually family responsibilities. It's really aimed, at that enormous universe of Americans, who started college and didn't finish. And, helping them get to the finish line, and we hope, a better station in life.

Now, we learned a lot, have learned a lot, about online education, as I mentioned. We will be offering, for those students who can't get here this fall, or choose not to come, in person, this fall an online option, for their undergraduate education. But Purdue Global is aimed at basically working Americans, and I will say, in your question, I think surfaces this; in the--with the damage, we've done college, and didn't finish, and helping them get to the finish line, and we hope of a better station, in life.

Now, we learned a lot, have learned a lot, about online education, as I mentioned, we will be offering, for those students who can't get here this fall, or choose not to come, in person this fall, an online option, for their undergraduate education.
But Purdue Global is aimed at, basically, working Americans, and, I will say, in your question, I think surfaces this, in the, with the damage we've done to this economy, it may be that there is a much greater need or greater a market, for very affordable, purely online, education, of the kind that Purdue Global and many other fine schools provide.

BRAUN:

And then to dig into that, a little more deeply. How long do you think that cost curve will take, from the involvement in online undergraduate, as well as, what you're learning from the, trying to educate older students? Do you think that is something that's going to be disruptive enough, to where--like healthcare, for instance, it costs us double, here in our country, roughly, what it does, in most other countries, with results, that aren't any better.

Do we have that opportunity, through disrupting education, in a way, since this is the next most stubborn cost increase, each year, through technology, through something different, that most of us might not see, at this point in time?

DANIELS:

The exorbitant, even staggering cost of those higher education, has been an issue for quite some time now. Thank you, for noting it. Purdue, we've not changed our tuition, in the last eight years, and have pledged that it'll last, at least through the 9th. We are less expensive, in nominal terms, than we were in 2012. And, with the result, I think we've been able to attract more students, and--and terrific students, for whom affordability and accessibility's a real issue.

Now, on the way--in the wake of this a terrible pandemic, it seems very clear, I think, that there will be a new pressure on schools, us, and everyone, to find every way possible, to make this vital service we sell, more affordable. And, I--I can't imagine you'll have any other outcome, than that.

BRAUN:

Keep it up. I think leading the way on trying to make something that is, along with health care, for most families, the demand is any elastic, we all want it. Ironically, of course, classic economics, that's where it costs us the most, in this country. And, we need to do much better, thank you.

ALEXANDER:

Thank you, Senator Braun. Senator Kaine.

KAINES:

Thank you, Mr. Chair. Thank you for this important hearing, and to our witnesses, I have been very, very, critical of the administration's handling, of the public health side, of this crisis. There's no reason the United States should have more than 100,000 deaths. There's no reason that our economy, should have been hammered, by this, in the way that it has. Especially, if you look at what's happened, in other countries.

Since I've been critical, and I'm going to continue to be, I also feel like I gotta give credit, where credit is due. The administration has done some things, that I want to thank them for. And, some are kind of, right in this bailiwick, helping us work out implementation challenges, to the CARES Act, you'll remember, Mr. Chair after the CARES Act passed, some thought that the aid that was going to go to students, might be taxable income. The administration worked quickly with us, to clarify, that was not the case.

Some universities, trying to get PPP loans, were told that their student--work-study students, would be counted as employees, putting them over the 500 limits, disqualifying them for PPP loans. Again, the administration
worked, very quickly, to allay that concern. So, I gotta give credit where credit is due, 'cause I'm going to turn soon, to some more criticism. I do want to thank, Senator Murphy, for raising the football question.

Because, it's an example of how opening, is complicated. Folks who play football, are amateurs. They're not getting paid. Folks who play football, are disproportionately, minority. There's been a number of articles, in Forbes and Sports Illustrated, about how football, especially in the power five conferences, is a big money thing. I hope we do not, because big conference football, is a big money thing; risk the lives of amateurs, who are predominantly, minority, by going back, before we can.

Especially, because the NCAA has figured this out, when they canceled spring sports, like baseball, they told all the athletes, if you want another year of eligibility, you can get it. And, many who lost their last year, of basketball or baseball, and were sort of heartbroken about it, have figured out ways, to go and get a master's degree, or stay at a college, for an extra year. so that, they can have that extra year of eligibility.

We can provide that experience for student-athletes, if they want it, without jeopardizing their health, because football is a money-making proposition, and I hope we'll all consider that. Alright, let me get to the critique. Mr. Chair you said a couple of times. Your whole opening statement lays it out, so well. The road to reopening is through testing. The CDC has a document, that they have put out, and continually updated. Its online, right now. It's called, considerations for institutions of higher education, the most recent update, was May 30th. It's a very comprehensive document. I just got it here, on my iPhone. You go through it, principles to keep in mind, IHG Institution of Higher Education, general settings, IHG on-campus housing settings, promoting behaviors that reduce spread, sub-points under all of these. Multiple sub-points, under all of these; maintaining healthy environments, let's see, what else do we have here? So many, maintaining healthy operations, room layout, water system supplies, subpoint, subpoint, subpoint.

You go through this endless document, not a mention of testing. The CDC guideline writes-- preparing for when someone gets sick, endless sub-points. There's not a single mention of testing in the document, that the CDC currently has, to give to our universities. Now, I get it, that our universities don't need a mandate, test everybody, or test 1/6 of students, they--but--but universities don't all have CDC's, they don't have NIH's. They need guidance.

If you're gonna give a university guidance, about how to make sure the water system is safe, or how to limit the size of activities, or what to do when a student gets sick, it would seem like you would give them some guidance, some recommendation, about testing protocols. Mr. Chair, you laid out, sort of a good one. Maybe you test everybody who's sick or anybody in a vulnerable population. And then, maybe you would want to do some sentinel testing, randomly, to determine the spread of antibodies.

And, and, it strikes me you could give that guidance, to our universities, without, you know, a mandate, that is too restrictive. My suspicion is this because this has been more general with the administration, they don't want to set goals for testing because they don't want to be measured against those goals. Because, they know that if they are measured, against the goals, they will fail, and fall short.

The only way you get to a goal is by stating it. If you don't state it, you're not going to get there. And, I think our CDC does a great disservice, to colleges, small, medium, and large, if they don't provide some basic guidance, about what a testing protocol, that would be successful, would look like. And, with that, Mr. Chair, I thank you.

ALEXANDER:

Thank you, Senator Kaine. Senator Hassan.

HASSAN:
Thank you, Mr. Chair. And, I want to thank you, and the ranking member, for having this hearing. And, I want to thank our witnesses, for all that you are doing, to help your students in our communities, between the COVID-19 crisis, and the rightful outrage, following the killing of George Floyd, this is a deeply challenging time, for our country. That is true at our institutions of higher education, as we grapple with how to reopen safely, during a global pandemic, we must also remember, that higher education institutions have historically, served as places of civil discourse.

As our local communities and our country works together, to make our systems more equitable and just, I look forward to working, with all of you. My first question is to our three college Presidents, last week, I sent a bipartisan letter, to Secretary DeVos, with Senators Tim Scott, Leffler, and Booker, urging the Department of Education to immediately ensure that students receive the financial aid, that they’re now eligible for, due to the economic impacts, of COVID-19.

Specifically, we asked the Department to issue guidance to colleges, to help ensure that student’s financial aid eligibility, can be appropriately adjusted, and to update the online FAFSA form, to capture recent changes in income, for financial aid applicants. So, to each the college presidents and I’ll start with you, President Daniels, can you speak to how your students have been economically impacted, by COVID-19?

I know you’ve done it a little bit, through this hearing, but more importantly, why further action by the Department of Education is needed, to help ensure, that students get the financial aid that they are eligible for.

DANIELS:

Well, senator, I can't say that we know, yet. We're in the process of finding out, now, which students, who have expressed the desire, to come to Purdue, will finally come. And, and can--can manage it. And, I don't doubt that many of them, have encountered economic, significant economic setbacks since they expressed that intention. We'll--we'll know much more, over the next few weeks.

I'm hoping that most of them, will be able to do it. But I applaud the initiative that you lead and those who joined you in it. Clearly, we already do, all we can, to get a more swiftly and directly and flexibly, which is the point, I think you just drew our attention to, to every young person, who needs it.

HASSAN:

Thank you, President Hampton.

HAMPTON:

Receiving Pell Grants, it is no question that our students have been negatively impacted, by COVID-19. When we did our survey of our students, that survey went to the students, about five weeks after the majority of our students, had been home. And, those students reported back to us, while they were at home, 78 percent of them said, I need help with food, 73 percent of them said that I need help with housing.

Our students need the help, now. They will need the help, in the fall. They did their FASFA based on the previous income, those incomes have now dropped. Their families will have less means, to help them, come August. So, whether we’re online or whether we are face to face, or whether we’re hybrid, our students need the help, as a result of COVID-19, and the vicious effects, of racism, on their parent's income.

HASSAN:

Well, thank you, Dr. Paxson.

PAXSON:
So, after the 2008 recession, financial aid at Brown rose by 12 percent. The maximum unemployment rate during that recession was 10 percent. We're heading to 20 percent. We're also hearing from students who are saying I know my FAFSA was correct, but it is no longer in any way an accurate portrayal of my family's economic circumstances. So, we are having to go back and--and revisit all of--all of those aid awards because we're in--we're in an extraordinary time for students and their families.

HASSAN:

Well, thank you. I want to turn to Dr. Benjamin now if I can. And I know Dr. Benjamin, you have talked a bit in your answers about what colleges need to do from a public health point of view, including robust testing and contact tracing as part of their strategy as they reopen. But you've also spoken about even with the best public health protocols in place to ensure that students, faculty and staff practice social distancing, recommended handwashing and wear masks, it's likely inevitable that there will be spikes in cases on college campuses.

So, what protocols do you believe should be in place to contain a detected spike in cases on college campuses? And if colleges are forced to close, what can be done to ensure that students leaving campus do not spread the virus in their own communities?

BENJAMIN:

They absolutely--the reason that I recommended that they link very closely with their--there state and local health departments is so that they can very quickly get involved in contact tracing and disease containment because in many cases, these will involve the community as well. And you know the--they should have plans for that. They should have prewritten guidelines for how they're going to handle it who is--who is on first, how the going to manage it, who is the spokesperson for the University, how do--you know, how do they link with the state and local health department so that there's no debate about who is actually managing the disease outbreak.

I would assume that in most cases, the contact tracing activity would be--will be done by the local health department not the University, but it depends on how big the community health program is at the University. They may very well want to be involved in that. But if you don't have plans for that it--it will be at--at best a mess, so it does require a fair amount of planning upfront and for all the various scenarios that they can possibly think of would be--would be important for them to do.

HASSAN:

Well, thank you. And Mr. Chair, I have lost sight of the clock on my screen.

ALEXANDER:

I'm afraid--I'm afraid we are well over.

HASSAN:

So, I'm going to assume that's about five minutes. Thank you.

ALEXANDER:

Thank you, Senator Hassan. Now, I'd say to the witnesses. We only have two senators remaining. Senator Jones.

JONES:

Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I really appreciate your leadership in having this hearing and to Ranking Member Murray. And also, thanks to all of our witnesses. Let me first associate myself with all of my colleague's
comments regarding the issues that we’re facing in America today and the problems that we’re facing. But as we see the issues out there, I’m also seeing some rays of hope.

I’m seeing folks that are peacefully demonstrating. I’m seeing people that are getting together to raise their voices, but doing it together locked arm in arm, black and white, folks of all races, religions, and walks of life. And I don’t think the media often focuses on that as much as they do on some more violent protests, but we see it happening all the time so I do think there’s rays of hope out there.

Dr. Hampton, I’d like to ask you--I’d like to follow up a little bit with you because as you probably know that I have been one of the champions, I think, for HBCUs. We have like 13 in my state. Senators Alexander and Murray have helped us get a lot of funding for HBCUs recently. And I joined with a couple of colleagues in sending a letter asking for an additional $1 billion funding. So, I’d like you to talk just a little bit, assuming you can get that, how would that be invested? How would that be used by the HBCUs around the country? They either make up shortfalls to help with students, infrastructure, how would you use the additional funding that Congress might give you?

HAMPTON:

Yes, sir. So, (INAUDIBLE) we have several strategies that we are using those funds for. Number one, we're using it to make our campus more safe for our students as they return to our campus. As I look at our numbers and our estimates in terms of where we are, I mean, we're going to need anywhere from $3 million-$6 million to $13 million to fully be able to convert Lane College from a residential campus to a hybrid campus that is both offering classes online and--and face-to-face.

So, for our purposes, we're going to use those funds to support those students to make sure this campus is safe and to begin the conversion of this campus to--to able to deliver at a high level online courses. I mean, we will need those funds for a number of different (INAUDIBLE), for learning management, for online services, purchase digital devices, to purchase digital resources, data plans for our students. Our--our needs are significant.

JONES:

Yes. Yes, sir. Thank you. I appreciate that. President Daniels, let me follow up. As you could probably guess, a Southeastern Conference Senator is going to follow up on some of the sports questions that Senator Murphy and Senator Kaine said, and there really have to. They asked several that I had. One would be what steps will you try to take to try to minimize the risk to these athletes and the coaches going in? Certainly, you may have to shut down a program if you see something, but what steps will you take to minimize the risk?

And second of all, the loss of revenue is going to be significant. The loss of revenue for colleges is going to be significant. What can Congress do to help make up for that? What do you going to plan on doing the makeup for the lost revenue that supports not only your football and basketball programs but also all of the other sports that you have at Purdue?

DANIELS:

Senator, our Athletic Department has put together a--a very protective plan. It will be a lot of separation, at least initially between athletes. It will be lots of testing, very regular testing to try to spot any infection at the first possible moment and--and do all the smart things about that.

Again, we believe we could, in an outdoor setting, have at least a fraction of the fans. They have to enter in different ways. And obviously, be spaced in different ways. But we do think that that part is--is possible and consistent with--with safe practices, but we’re all in very new water here and--we--we may well change some of these directions as we all learn more.
With regards to the dollars question, I'm not sure that--that a--a federal treasury that's already done what it's done and borrowed what it's borrowed once to be making up athletic shortfalls, but we at Purdue, I'm proud to say, have always operated a self-sufficient athletic program, which has--we've never had to--we've never imposed a fee or--on our students who are not able to play and may not even be that interested in athletics as much as some of us are.

So, on--on--on the list of huge problems we've been discussing this morning, I do want to minimize this one, but I--I for one would not urge that you place that high, nearly as high as, for example, helping HBCUs and some of these other goals.

JONES:

Thank you. I was hoping that would be your answer. I appreciate that very much. And thank you, Mr. Chairman.

ALEXANDER:

Thank you, Senator Jones. Senator Rosen.

ROSEN:

Thank you, Chairman Alexander, Ranking Member Murray. I want to thank all the witnesses for being here today for the work and care that you do to help our students and those that work at our universities, but I believe we really need relief for DREAMers and our student veterans. And the COVID pandemic has severely impacted Nevada's colleges and universities and the students they're serving. That's why I was glad to vote for the CARES Act, which provided more than $6 billion to our institutes of higher education to provide emergency financial aid to students most affected by the pandemic.

The new law intentionally provides significant flexibility to institutions in determining how to distribute funding among students, including those who are most in need. Unfortunately, the Department of Education has decided that not only students who are--that--that only students who are eligible to receive federal financial aid qualify for CARES Act assistance. This decision includes student veterans, individuals who haven't completed the FASFA application and DACA recipients, many of whom have the added financial burden of supporting their parents, their siblings, their children, being the first in their families to attend college.

In April, I joined a letter along with several members of the committee asking Secretary DeVos to reverse this decision to prohibit institutions of higher education for providing CARES Act emergency financial aid grants to undocumented students, but have not yet received a response.

So, Dr. Paxton, like our educational leaders in Nevada, you and your university have long supported protections for DREAMers. Given this and the extraordinary situation in which we find ourselves, do you agree with the Department of Education's guidance, excluding undocumented students from the CARES Act?

PAXSON:

No, I don't agree at all. I firmly believe that if the point is to protect students who are the future of our country, we should be protecting DACA students, veterans, international students who are here in this country and need the support.

ROSEN:

Thank you. I appreciate that. I'm going to ask all the panelists this next question that the Department of Education, this guidance was given that excluded our student veterans, veterans. They have served our country, protected our nation. Sometimes their older students. They have families. (INAUDIBLE) really important that they continue to get any support they need along with those who don't fill out FASFA
applications for many reasons, maybe they come from foster families, their homeless youth, all kinds of reasons that those students aren't filling out, don't know how to do that.

We want to know how your students are going to help--how you're going to help these students? And if you agree with that decision to exclude the student veterans? And let's begin with Governor Daniels, and we can go on to Dr. Hampton and then returned to Dr. Paxton again.

DANIELS:

No, thank you, Senator. I agree. These--these don't seem likewise choices. The--frankly, I did not know about the impact on veterans, so thank you for drawing our attention to that. From that, I can just say, and as we did in a--to a previous question that we're doing all we can to move money to scholarships and to financial assistance. And we do anticipate that whatever shape our applicants were in just two or three months ago, it is very different today, and we're going to need to do more.

HAMPTON:

Senator, my college is a veteran-friendly institution. I am not aware of any negative impact that--that this ruling had on the veterans at Lane College. However, for those several students that needed support who were not eligible for the CARES Act, we were able to find those students through a Board of Trustees that made donations to support all of our students.

ROSEN:

Thank you. I appreciate that. Dr. Paxton.

PAXSON:

I would just reiterate what I said before. You know, I--I think all students are equally deserving. Students who deserve on economic grounds to be supported need to be supported. We have not yet received any CARES Act funding. We're awaiting some guidance for the Department of Education. But our intent would be to support students equally as well as we can.

ROSEN:

And I just have a few seconds left. But I just want to address the digital divide. I'm going to go really. Of course, as we do distance-learning, the fact remains before coronavirus, far too many college graduate students, of course, they had lacked adequate broadband access. That happens in my rural communities up and down the state in our underserved communities, so what can you do or what are you planning to do to address this digital divide, particularly in broadband as it might apply to your students? And I guess you can go, Dr. Paxton. I see you first, so we'll let you go first this time.

PAXSON:

So--so, we had done a lot of work this spring, making sure all of our students have Internet access from home or Wi-Fi hotspots and have done pretty well with that. Another thing we're focusing on is helping the City of Providence make sure that all of the high school students in the area have digital access because that's been a huge problem for high school education.

ROSEN:

Fantastic. Thank you. Let's go on to--let's see, whoever would like to go next. I guess, Dr. Hampton.

HAMPTON:
Lane College is sourcing and providing digital devices, as well as hotspots for our students. And we are able to use the funds, the CARES funds, to--to fund some of that.

ROSEN:

Perfect. And Governor Daniels.

DANIELS:

Yeah, a similar answer. We--we had problems. Fortunately, they were fairly limited, generally in rural spaces, as you had suggested, and we were able to come with individual assistance, as far as I know in--in each case. Also, we are blessed as a land-grant school with an extension service, so we do have offices in even very small population counties. And I think it was a little advantage in--in helping those who were struggling.

ROSEN:

I appreciate that. I appreciate all your doing. Thank you.

Closing Statement
Committee Chairman Lamar Alexander (R-TN)

Thank you, Senator Rosen. I want to thank, Senator Murray and her staff, as well as our staff for--for their cooperation and their technical expertise today in this hearing. I want to especially thank the four witnesses who all have demanding schedules who live made time for us. This is more of a value than you might think to us and to our staff and to the American people as they--as they listen to President Daniel, Dr. Paxton, Dr. Logan, Dr. Benjamin.

There is no more surer sign that the--American life is regaining its rhythm than when 70-75 million students head back to college and back to school, which is where we believe they will go. And our focus this month is to help make sure they go safely. Today, our discussion has been about colleges. Next week, we will be talking about kindergarten through the 12th grade going back to school--school safely. We'll be having other hearings this month on--on telelearning, telemedicine, on looking ahead to the next pandemic as we continue our oversight responsibility.

I'm going to include in the record a letter from the American Council on education that to which one of the Senators referred earlier. It's--that organization is an umbrella organization representing most of the 6000 higher education institutions in the country. It asks Congress to consider a number of things, including properly constructed liability protection for students--for institutions are as a result of COVID-19. I also heard that from virtually every one of the 90 Tennessee higher education institutions with whom I had a discussion by teleconference last week.

The issue of testing came up and my advice to, for example, Dr. Hampton talked about Jackson, Tennessee. In our state, the governor said if in doubt get a test, and I know that that works because I went to the public health department in my hometown of Marysville and waited about three minutes in line and got my negative test which fortunately turned out to be negative a couple of weeks ago. So, for colleges and universities who don't have large hospitals or their own capacity to create tests, my advice would be to be a part of the state's plan. Because according to the law, every state submits to the federal government its testing needs for the next month, and then if it's needs cannot be met by the state, the federal government insist--will--will help with that, for example, with swabs or reagents.

Admiral (INAUDIBLE) testified before our committee that we should that-- have 10 million test capacity in the country this month, which would be about, if my math is right, this--the 500,000 tests a day that was mentioned by Dr. Benjamin. He also said that he anticipated that there would be 40 to 50 million tests available per month by September. In addition to that, Dr. Collins is heading up an effort of the National Institutes of Health to--which we call the shark tank was to create a highly competitive environment to see we can find one, two, three, four new ways of creating accurate, rapid tests which would be tens of millions of more tests so that there
would be an ample supply this fall for universities. So, my advice would be if--if there's a question for a college or institution about testing become a part of your state's plan and let the state look ahead and help with that.

This has been very helpful--and I have some words I'm supposed to repeat. The record will remain open for ten days. Members may submit additional information within that time. Thank you for being here. Our next meeting will be next Wednesday, June 10, COVID-19: Going Back to School Safely. The committee will stand adjourned.