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# KATRINA'S DISPLACED SCHOOL CHILDREN

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## HEARING

BEFORE THE

SUBCOMMITTEE ON EDUCATION AND EARLY  
CHILDHOOD DEVELOPMENT

OF THE

COMMITTEE ON HEALTH, EDUCATION,  
LABOR, AND PENSIONS  
UNITED STATES SENATE

ONE HUNDRED NINTH CONGRESS

FIRST SESSION

ON

EXAMINING FEDERAL AND STATE EFFORTS TO MEET THE EDU-  
CATIONAL NEEDS OF STUDENTS AND FAMILIES DISPLACED BY HUR-  
RICANE KATRINA

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SEPTEMBER 22, 2005

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## KATRINA'S DISPLACED SCHOOLCHILDREN

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THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 22, 2005

U.S. SENATE,  
SUBCOMMITTEE ON EDUCATION AND EARLY CHILDHOOD  
DEVELOPMENT, COMMITTEE ON HEALTH, EDUCATION, LABOR,  
AND PENSIONS,  
*Washington, DC.*

The subcommittee met, pursuant to notice, at 3:02 p.m., in room SD-430, Dirksen Senate Office Building, Senator Alexander, chairman of the subcommittee, presiding.

Present: Senators Alexander, Sessions, Enzi, Dodd, Reed, and Kennedy.

Senator ALEXANDER. Good afternoon. The Education and Child Development Subcommittee will come to order.

I want to welcome you here, Chairman Enzi, Senator Kennedy, Senator Reed, and we have Senator Lott. I want to make a suggestion to the Senators. We have two votes which are scheduled to begin in about 5 minutes. Senator Lott is here now to make a short statement. Senator Landrieu is coming in a few minutes to make a short statement. I thought what we might do is go for about 20 minutes, and then adjourn the hearing for about 20 minutes, and come back.

Would that fit your schedule, Senator Kennedy, Senator Reed? Because I think all of us want to hear the testimony, and I would like to take advantage because some of the witnesses have come a great distance to be here. We want to make sure as many Senators as possible can hear the witnesses testimony.

I am going to abbreviate my opening statement to this point and let Senator Lott go first. I simply want to say to begin with, that Hurricane Katrina displaced over 1 million people, at least 20 times more than in any other disaster handled by the Federal Emergency Management Agency, and 372,000 of those displaced by Katrina are school-age children in kindergarten through the 12th grade. Another 73,000 are college students. Today in this hearing, at the request of Chairman Enzi, we are here to see how we can help all of Katrina's 370,000 displaced schoolchildren.

I am hopeful that we could have a consensus on how to approach this, and that we can introduce legislation quickly and get on with it because the public and the private schools who are helping these children are hiring new teachers, renting new buses, and have many expenses. What we will do is we will hear from Senator Lott, and then we will hear from Senator Landrieu, who just came in. Then we will adjourn the hearing, at about 3:20 p.m. Then we will

come back about 20 minutes later after all of us have a chance to cast those two votes.

Senator Lott.

**STATEMENTS OF THE HON. TRENT LOTT, A U.S. SENATOR FROM THE STATE OF MISSISSIPPI; AND SENATOR MARY LANDRIEU, A U.S. SENATOR FROM THE STATE OF LOUISIANA**

Senator LOTT. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and it is a great pleasure to be here with my colleague from our neighboring State of Louisiana, Senator Landrieu. We are both dealing with problems of a magnitude we have never dealt with before, and it is incomprehensible until you have gone down and taken a look at it.

One of the things that concerns me the breadth of it, and we are finding that we—

Senator ALEXANDER. Is your mike on, Senator Lott?

Senator LOTT. It is on. I will get a little closer.

It is so easy to focus on the immediate aftermath, the recovery, the cleanup and the beginning of reconstruction, but you have to look at what is happening on a human basis, people that have lost their jobs and need unemployment compensation, people that cannot afford their health care, need some temporary expansion of Medicaid. We need to look at transportation, and we need to look at education.

I want to say how proud I am, Mr. Chairman, that you are the head of this subcommittee, and with your background, I feel very good about things, innovative things that we are going to do in education and early childhood development.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman, for pushing the subcommittee to have this hearing, and Senator Kennedy and Senator Reed, thank you for being here.

I do not want to give you a litany of horror stories. Let me just cite a couple of examples of the magnitude of this problem. In my own State we had, not counting higher education, community colleges and universities that did have damage also, but we have 246 schools in my State that received severe damage. Twenty of them probably are not going to be repairable, but 16 we know for sure, totally destroyed with wind and water. Those that were close to the shoreline are just absolutely gone. And so those children have been spread across—well, our people, at least, over 40 States. Mississippians are in 40 States and Louisianans probably in every State. The children are with them, or many times I have found that the parents have stayed to try to work through the cleanup, and they have sent their children to other places to go to school.

In my State I have a list of the numbers of students that schools are accepting. Madison County, Mississippi has accepted 350. Warren County, which is probably 150 miles from the Gulf Coast, has over 200 there. And in my hometown of Pascagoula, every school had so much damage that we are not going to be able to get the students back in there probably till the first of the year, with two exceptions. The high school, which was our newest school, maybe could be occupiable in October, and our local Catholic School, Sacred Heart. Because of where they were located, they are back in business, and a lot of the children who were going to the public schools, since my community is about 50/50 Protestant and non-

Protestant, mostly Catholic, some Jewish, they are in those Catholic schools. I know that you have testimony you are going to have here from the Orthodox Jewish congregations that has a school in I believe Memphis that has accepted students.

We need to take a look at how we are going to help the teachers and the students, as well as what it is going to take to rebuild these schools and what are we going to require of the rebuilding. I hope that you will think about it in an innovative way. I am not interested in necessarily making permanent, but I do think we have to make sure that these school districts that have shown magnanimous gestures, have taken on extra children without extra space and without extra teachers sometimes, or in some instances have hired the teachers from the Gulf Coast, that those school districts get some assistance because they are part of the evacuation effort that is under way, and we cannot just leave them holding the bag.

I do think that at least on a temporary basis, that money needs to follow the students. If they go to a parochial school, a Jewish school, a Catholic school, an episcopal school or private school on a temporary basis, we have to make sure that those schools have what they need to do the job. Otherwise, we are not going to be able to accommodate them.

I thank you for having this early hearing. I believe that within the next 2 or 3 weeks we need to develop a package that will deal with the broader sense. It will have multiple titles, but we cannot have a bill that does not have a title dealing with the education component that we need in our States, and I do not have the magic solutions here, but I believe you will help us find some that will make a big difference in education throughout the region, and frankly, maybe even across America.

With that, my colleague, I will yield to you.

Senator ALEXANDER. Thank you, Senator Lott, for coming. I know Senator Cochran has a staff member here, and we will look forward to working with you both to help Mississippi.

Senator LOTT. I would like to note the Assistant Secretary for the Office of Elementary and Secondary Education, Henry Johnson, until just a very few months ago, when he saw what was fixing to hit us—[Laughter]—was our Superintendent of Education in Mississippi, and he has assured me he will take care of all of our needs.

[Laughter.]

Senator ALEXANDER. He has a chance. He is the next witness right after Senator Landrieu.

Senator Landrieu from Louisiana? Thank you very much for being here.

Senator LANDRIEU. When he took this job, he had no idea how big it was going to be, but he is up to the task.

I want to thank my colleague from Mississippi. He most certainly, in his State has shared in large measure the brunt of this devastation, which as he said, is very hard to describe, and I thank those Senators, Senator Enzi, Senator Kennedy, Senator Dodd and others that have come down to the State to see firsthand the devastation.

This is not a local problem. It is not even a regional problem. It is a national tragedy, unprecedented in its nature, and it is going to take a national response. It is going to take our best thinking, our very creative thinking, and our quick action, because the situation is quite dire and quite challenging.

Besides the numbers that Senator Lott has indicated to you, just in my brief testimony, in Louisiana where we took the brunt of Katrina, 187,000 public school students are in different schools today than they were 5 weeks ago. 61,000 private school students have been displaced. A total of 8 Louisiana school districts, our three largest school districts have been impacted, Orleans, Jefferson and St. Tammany. Three of our largest have been impacted directly. Four school systems may be able to reopen by November, St. Charles, St. Tammany, Washington and the city of Bogalusa School System. We have 66, 64 parishes, 2 city systems. Unfortunately, it is projected that the four other districts, which include Jefferson and Orleans, our two largest, 450,000 people each, one a suburban parish, one an urban parish—Plaquemines and St. Bernard, which are fairly large systems themselves—will not be able to open.

I am proud to say that 2 days after the storm, our Superintendent, Cecil Picard, walked to the microphone just a few inches from me and said—while people were still on their roofs—“I want the parents that can hear me, when you get off the roofs, get out of the water and we are finished saving lives, please focus on getting your children in school for their mental and emotional stability and health, for the stability of your family.” It is extremely important that parents focus. They have lost their homes. They have lost their jobs. They have lost their cars, but you know, their children are alive.

And our Superintendent had the good sense to say, just focus on one thing and try to get your kids in school because it brings a sense of stability to the family. So that is what everybody tried to do. They went to any school that would take them, and just tried to get their kids enrolled. It brings order to the day. It brings a sense of security when hundreds of thousands of families have no security. They have no job, no place to go, no place to work. The schools have in some way become their lifeline to get normalcy. So that is just an emotional picture to think about.

These districts are also major employers. Our districts employ 7,865 teachers, 1,700 certified staff, and 7,000 support workers, for a total of 17,000 people that are not receiving paychecks today. I am sorry. They may be receiving paychecks today. We do not know how long they are going to be receiving paychecks, but the thing is you cannot have schools then become places of unemployment. You have to have some sort of continuation so that the economy can get started again.

Our delegation, Louisiana delegation introduced some things today. I will not go into too much detail. We will submit it for the record. But I want to commend Senator Kennedy and Enzi and the administration for their preliminary support of either 4,000 per student or 90 percent of instructional and 75 per student that would, as Senator Lott said, of course cover our public school students, but also give some relief to families who went to whatever school would take them. We are very grateful to our Catholic school

system and our private school system for stepping up in this very unusual time, and if we can continue that on a temporary basis until things stabilize, I think that would be very helpful.

Let me just say one other thing, particularly to Senator Kennedy. Senator Kennedy, besides the teachers being out of work, some of their health insurance is not portable, and so these teachers—we are trying to retain our teachers—and let me say Mississippi has been very good competing for some of our good teachers in Louisiana all these years, and Texas competes for some of our teachers. So Louisiana has an added problem, that if we can, and Mississippi, keep some of our best teachers, other States may pull them away. Obviously, they have to work, they want to work themselves. So our Superintendent really wants us to come up with an incentive program to keep our good teachers so we can rebuild our school system, when obviously the water goes down, the environment is cleaned up, the highways are reconstructed and people can actually get to the school buildings when they are rebuilt.

I am going to submit the rest for testimony, but that is just elementary and secondary. We have got universities that are closed down, public and private, that are also large employers, and it really is a very comprehensive problem. Like Senator Lott said, I wish there was a magic bullet, because I would go find it and give it to you, but there is not one. But there are things that we can do, and I think beginning with the work that this committee is doing is a great help, and we thank you very much for your consideration of our pretty desperate situation.

Senator ALEXANDER. Thank you, Senator Landrieu for your leadership, and we look forward to working with you and Senator Lott as we develop our legislation, and as I said earlier, hope to do it in a consensus way and to do it rapidly.

[The prepared statement of Senator Landrieu follows:]

#### PREPARED STATEMENT OF SENATOR LANDRIEU

Good afternoon. Thank you for giving me the opportunity to speak today on the long term consequences this great disaster will have on Louisiana's schools.

There are 187,000 public school students and 61,000 private school students that have been displaced by Hurricane Katrina. A total of eight Louisiana school districts were directly impacted by Hurricane Katrina. Four school systems may be able to re-open by November: St. Charles, St. Tammany, Washington and the City of Bogalusa School Systems. Unfortunately it is projected that the other 4 districts could be closed for a whole school year: Jefferson, Orleans, Plaquemines, and St. Bernard School Systems.

The most severely impacted Parishes have lost approximately \$800 million in local revenues and in Minimum Foundation Program funds will be impacted and/or lost. These districts employ 7,865 teachers, 1,700 other certified staff and 7,022 support workers, for a total of about 17,000 potentially displaced workers from 236 schools.

While the hit was the greatest to the school serving the Southern portion of our State, this disaster has also had a substantial impact on other Louisiana school districts. Today, our delegation intro-

duced a package meant to address some of the short and long term needs of these districts.

First, we must do everything we can to encourage and strengthen our schools as soon as possible. Before Katrina, Louisiana's per student expenditures were \$7,991. Senators Kennedy and Enzi have proposed legislation that would allocate \$4000 per pupil grants to be disbursed to school systems that serve as host to displaced students. The Administration has proposed paying for 90 percent of instructional costs per pupil not to exceed \$7,500 for host schools. Funds provided for both the schools that were directly impacted and those that serve as hosts will go a long way in covering the gaps left in schools.

Second, we must be creative and engage programs aimed at getting the best and brightest of our teachers to return home as soon as possible. Louisiana has had to fight hard to keep our best teachers. Our border States are infamous for posting billboards, luring our young graduates to come and teach in their schools. Many of our teachers have begun to seek full-time or part-time employment in schools outside their district.

A teacher in St. Bernard parish contacted me because she is trying to find a teaching job in another State but is afraid her health insurance will be cut off in the interim. Numerous parents have contacted me because they need to go back to work and want to make sure their children are placed safely back in school first. Others have called and wanted to know what will happen to their jobs if the school system they worked in goes under. Therefore, the delegation is recommending \$750,000,000 be given to the Louisiana Department of Education for the creation of a "Coming Home" teacher incentive fund to be given in order to retain our qualified teaching professionals during the time it takes to rebuild the schools.

Third, we will now have an opportunity to re-vitalize our public school buildings. But this has to be done in a smart way. It is very important to me that we do not simply rebuild our schools to their pre-Katrina substandard state but instead take this opportunity to make our schools a more welcoming learning environment that encourages academic excellence.

Therefore, I have recommended \$2 billion for my Superintendent of Education to use in constructing schools that embrace research based construction models such as the 21st Century Community Learning Centers. This model is based on small, personalized, state-of-the-art elementary, middle and high schools built to help students achieve, graduate and be prepared for the 21st Century competitive economy. The schools would also function as community learning centers before and after normal school day hours—serving the community with pre-K opportunities, literacy classes and adult educational opportunities.

Finally, I know that many of you on this committee share my views on the important role Charter Schools play in improving public education. Before the storm hit, I had launched an Educational Venture fund—a public/private partnership I had started with the Dean of the University of New Orleans to take over failing public schools turning them into high achieving charter schools.

I know that one of the issues before you to decide is what impact this disaster will and should have on our efforts to Leave No Child

Behind. Let me take this opportunity to remind you that Louisiana has been noted for having one of the best accountability programs in the Nation—our Board of Education understood the importance of accountability standards years before NCLB was enacted and had a running start at keeping our teachers and the school system accountable to our kids. Our Louisiana Superintendent of schools, Cecil Picard fondly calls our successful accountability program the “Engine for Change.” I am confident that he will work closely with the States that have graciously taken in our displaced students to ensure that our engines never stop running despite where our students are placed.

Everyday that our Louisiana students are not in school is 1 more day that they are not learning and therefore not reaching their full potential. I know I share the views of this committee that we must cross all political divides and unite to make sure that everything in our power as elected officials is done to get these deserving kids back in school and therefore back to life as they know it.

I want to thank Secretary Spellings for reaching out to me and to Louisiana during this challenging chapter in our State’s history. She warmly expressed her mutual admiration for Superintendent Picard and I asked her to continue to work closely with our State officials to make sure that all branches of the government come together to ensure a superior education for all Louisiana’s students.

Senator KENNEDY. Could I ask just a question of these Senators before we go on?

Senator ALEXANDER. Of course.

Senator KENNEDY. I think in the funding, we have to find some ways of helping all the students. There are a couple different points that I would ask you. The first involves the amount of payment that ought to go to schools receiving students displaced by Katrina. We were thinking about working from the average per pupil expenditure in the State. States have different amounts in terms of their per pupil funding for public schools, if you know what I mean. I do not know if you have thoughts.

A second point is that we know that FEMA is going to have to support reconstruction, but listening to you, you were talking about the need for schools to open quickly. There may be schools where some additional help and assistance, not the whole reconstruction, but interim help and assistance might be needed to re-open quicker. I do not know whether you have any reaction on those points.

I just want to mention we are proud of what’s been done to respond to date. We have 1,000 college students displaced by the storm in Massachusetts. We have 437 at Boston University alone.

Senator LANDRIEU. Thank you, Senator Kennedy. Give them a good education. We worry about you all up there, how you all educate our kids, and send them on home.

[Laughter.]

Senator KENNEDY. We are going to send them on down to Trent Lott.

[Laughter.]

Senator LANDRIEU. No telling what they are lining up there in Massachusetts.

Senator LOTT. Don’t mess up those students up there.

[Laughter.]

Senator LANDRIEU. Yes, and send them home. We thank you, Senator. But on that issue we will submit for the record, but I guess it is about \$4,000 to \$5,000, \$4,000 is our—I am sorry—\$7,000 is our minimum foundation formula, but the record will reflect what that is.

Not only do we have to help the schools that were closed and impacted get started up, but the school systems, particularly our public school systems that have absorbed. In some instances in Louisiana their enrollment has gone up 20 percent. So while their schools were crowded, Senator Dodd, to begin with, now they have 20 percent more capacity. So you can imagine the strain that that is on their school system. So even parochial schools have stepped up, but our public school systems have stepped up under great strain. So we can give you those numbers.

Senator LOTT. The major source of our funding for our schools in Mississippi comes from the ad valorem, our property taxes. But from Pascagoula to Biloxi to Pass Christian, the Bay St. Louis to Waveland, there will be none.

Senator LANDRIEU. New Orleans, Jefferson, St. Tammany.

Senator LOTT. And Pass Christian, I would have to check but they might have one school standing.

Senator DODD. No, they do not. Ted and I spent some time, and there is nothing left. That building is gone.

Senator LOTT. The people are going to come back. We are going to have to help with their schools, but the towns are not going to have any property taxes coming in to pay for that. So there you are damned if you do, damned if you don't. I will just give you one example. There was a discussion the other day about trying to come up with a package to help people that did not have insurance, flood insurance or any insurance in some instances, to help them get something so they could get back into some sort of housing, and the package actually would have been private mostly, 75 percent, up 75,000, plus 26,000 I think possibly from the Federal Government.

And when it was being discussed with people from Bay St. Louis, Waveland and Pass Christian, finally the mayor of Bay St. Louis, a guy named Eddie Favre, he said, "No, wait a minute. If this is a buy-out do you mean we have to give up our property, our lots?" And the response was, "Yeah, this plan is a buy-out." He said, "We do not want it. We are going to rebuild on our lots. We will work a deal with you, but we are not giving up our homesteads. We are coming back." And they will. We have done it before in Pass Christian, where Senator Kennedy and Senator Dodd have been.

But in the meantime, Mary is right, Senator Landrieu is right, once you get your kids back in school and once you get back to work, order begins to get back in place, even if you do not have a home or even a car. But I think that getting kids back in school or making sure your kids are going to school and being taken care of is the most important thing for a lot of people right now. That is why it means so much to us that school districts all over our State, and Louisiana, as far away as Tennessee and all over this country, are taking in these kids. It makes all the difference. We have to make sure those schools that have done that as a magnani-

mous gesture, do not wind up having financial problems of their own as a result of it.

I do not know what the State number is, but it is not probably what it should be. We have always financed our schools without—

Senator DODD. The impact aid example, I mean most of us have military bases, and of course the arrival of students who come, their billets, we have accommodated that over the years and helped school districts, obviously on a much smaller scale than what you are talking about here, but nonetheless there are examples of how that can work.

I just want to underscore the point Teddy has made and both of you have made. We heard this in Alabama with the mayor and heard it in Louisiana, you build them, the kids will come back. And the schools really are the anchor. People will sacrifice a lot of things, having a place to live, having a place to work, but their kids' school, people move all over this country to be in the place where their kids get the best education. This is the magnet. This is going to make the biggest difference in the world in my view, of making it possible for these children, these families to come back, is having an educational opportunity. So it is the critical piece in my view.

Senator LANDRIEU. And it is a great opportunity for us to build even a better school system, which is the view of all the members of this committee. Like Senator Lott said, we want our homesteads back and our lots. We may need to build them a little higher, a little stronger, but we need to build our schools a little higher, a little strong, not just physically but academically as well. I think this committee understands you are the experts, and we are here to help you.

Senator ALEXANDER. When we come back, our witness will be Mr. Johnson, the recent Superintendent of schools in Mississippi, and we will ask him to describe the President's proposals. Senator Kennedy, the administration's proposal, not much different than the one that you and Senator Enzi had, was that the Federal Government pay for 90 percent of the per pupil expenditure, but not to exceed \$7,500 per student.

So far as Senator Dodd's point about the importance of the schools, I found something my great-great-grandfather wrote about the pioneer days in Tennessee, and they said, "First you build the church, then you build the school." Those are the first two things they did in our pioneer communities, and I think we can try to remember that here.

We all need to go vote, but we will reconvene at 10 till 4:00, about then, and we will begin with our opening statements, then we will go to Mr. Johnson, and to our other witnesses. The hearing is in recess until 10 till 4:00.

[Recess.]

Senator ALEXANDER. Thank you for waiting. The hearing of the Education Subcommittee on Katrina's displaced schoolchildren will now resume.

The other Senators are coming back. We are voting on final passage of the military construction legislation appropriations bill, which is important that we get done right away because we are

calling on our military to do things overseas as well as here in the United States these days, and all of the Senators wanted to be there for that.

Senator Dodd, Senator Enzi and Senator Kennedy will be back, and when they come back, I will introduce them. Following my statement, the other Senators may make an opening statement. I will first introduce the witnesses that we have, so that when it comes their turn to be presented, I will not introduce them again.

Following the opening statements by the Senators, Assistant Secretary Henry Johnson is here from the Department of Education. Mr. Johnson, as Senator Lott reminded us, was the Chief State School Officer in Mississippi until not very long ago, and now he is the Assistant Secretary for Elementary and Secondary Education—the top person in the Department of Education, the U.S. Department of Education for K through 12. He will be on a panel by himself, and we look forward to hearing from Mr. Johnson how the U.S. Department of Education assesses the problem of Katrina's displaced schoolchildren and what the President's recommended solutions are for helping Katrina's displaced school children so we can consider the President's recommendation. I know the Senators will have questions of Mr. Johnson, and we will have one round of questions for him.

Then we will go to our next panel. Our next panel includes school leaders from the affected area. Darryl Gates, for example, is a Middle School Special Education Teacher from Shreveport, LA. He has been a public school teacher for 28 years and he is currently a special education teacher, a highly qualified one. He has a broad background and resume in education, serving a 3-year term on the Board of Examiners of the National Council and the Accreditation of Teacher Education.

Sister Michaeline Green is the Superintendent of Schools for the Catholic Diocese of Baton Rouge, LA. She has had that job since 1977. We look forward to her testimony especially because Baton Rouge is the closest big city I suppose to New Orleans, and a great many of the families from New Orleans and the parishes that have been affected, have moved to Baton Rouge. Sister Michaeline has also a distinguished background of educational achievement and active community involvement.

The two other witnesses who we will hear from are Rodney R. LaFon, who is Superintendent of St. Charles Parish Public Schools in Luling, LA. He was appointed Superintendent in 1995. He served as a music teacher, and an Assistant Principal. He has been an educator for over 30 years, and his schools have won awards on a number of different occasions.

Then Mike Stein, who is President of Margolin Hebrew Academy in Memphis, TN. It is a Jewish day school with an enrollment of 250 students from pre-kindergarten through the 12th grade. He has been a board member for 30 years. He is Senior Vice President of Investments with Wachovia Securities and he will talk about how that school in Memphis has helped with displaced Katrina schoolchildren.

Now that we have resumed, I will make my opening statement. Then we will go to Senator Dodd. Chairman Enzi of the full committee will then make a statement, and then Senator Kennedy we

expect will be back, who is the ranking member of the full committee.

#### OPENING STATEMENT OF SENATOR ALEXANDER

Senator ALEXANDER. We have already heard that 372,000 of those displaced by Katrina are school-age children in kindergarten through the 12th grade. Today we are here to see what we can do to help all of those children. Katrina, the storm, did not discriminate among children, and neither should we.

Many communities are struggling to meet those challenges. We are hearing a lot about Texas in the news today because of Hurricane Rita. Texas already expects to enroll as many as 60,000 students who have been displaced by Katrina. Houston Independent School District, which has enrolled roughly 4,700 displaced students, has hired 180 new teachers, added 37 new bus routes, ordered about 10,000 new textbooks. Georgia has accepted more than 9,000 students, Alabama 5,400, my home State of Tennessee about 3,500, and the number may grow.

Public school systems across the country, and especially those nearest Louisiana and Mississippi are working hard to absorb those students, and they are absorbing most of those students. But private schools are joining in the effort too. We already heard Senator Lott say that in his hometown of Pascagoula, other than the high school, the only school still standing is a Catholic school, and the only one available for many of the children there.

This should not surprise us that the private schools are joining in the effort, since the four Louisiana parishes hit the hardest by Katrina had nearly one-third or 61,000 of their 187,000 students in private schools. Fifty-thousand students from the Catholic Archdiocese of Greater New Orleans alone are displaced.

In Texas, for example, 4,000 of the 60,000 displaced students have been enrolled in private institutions. In Baton Rouge, which we will hear more about in the testimony today, reported on National Public Radio Monday said there were 5 to 10 thousand displaced private school students with no school to attend. To accommodate them the Catholic diocese there is struggling to establish satellite schools, some located great distances away, which students will attend at night.

In Memphis, which we will also hear more about today, the willingness of private schools to help has been a big help to the public schools. The Memphis City Schools, the public schools, for example, have enrolled over 650 new students. The adjacent Shelby County Public School District has enrolled over 600 new children, a difficult burden in a school district already growing by 1,000 students and one new school building a year. In addition to that, the Memphis Catholic Diocese has enrolled over 250 students to help share the load.

So how should we here at the Federal level respond? I think we would be wise to take a lesson from the people who elected us and sent us here. Let me give you an example of what I mean. A couple of weeks ago in Maryville, Tennessee, my hometown, former Vice President Al Gore flew in with a planeload of 80 evacuees. They just arrived. That happens to be one of the most Republican coun-

ties in Tennessee. Nobody asked about anybody's politics. Everybody just pitched in to help.

Last weekend in the church where I am an elder in Nashville, Westminster Presbyterian Church, we sent \$80,000, an Associate Preacher and a truckload of clothes and Clorox to Southern Mississippi. The preacher reported back that one grateful man said on his cell phone, "The Presbyterians are here and they have Clorox."

[Laughter.]

When the Clorox was passed out, nobody asked if anybody else was a Presbyterian.

Now this Sunday the headline in the Nashville Newspaper, *The Tennessean* said, "Private schools welcome those displaced by Katrina." The newspaper had a glowing account of this, which I will include in the record. But basically it said these children are in crisis, they have been displaced, and the principal of Father Ryan High School accepted 20 students, waiving a \$6,800 tuition and a \$350 activity fee. He says it is not about money. There is no amount of money that equals being family.

That is how people at home are trying to help. I am sure that is true in Connecticut, I am sure it is true in Wyoming, I am sure it is true in Massachusetts. We know it is true in Texas. I make these points because I hope we can follow in that same spirit. How can we help all the children? How should we get to it?

The two proposals right now, the President has made one, we will hear about that from Mr. Johnson. Chairman Enzi and Senator Kennedy have made one. We will talk about that.

It is pretty easy to figure out what to do about the kids in public schools because the Federal Government is already helping the public schools. We have a couple of suggestions on the table that are really not that different. It basically says, take an amount of money such as the amount the State spends per student, and for 1 year on an emergency basis, let that money essentially follow the child to the public school.

But if we follow our traditional approach, it does not do anything for the kids who found themselves in private schools. But there is nothing traditional about Katrina. So we need to find some non-traditional way to help on a temporary emergency basis.

The Washington Post editorial this morning gave us some principles which I thought were pretty wise, and I would like to quote them in conclusion. It said, "Just as it's important not to sneak in an enormous new Federal program for ideological reasons"—they are talking about a new Federal voucher program for kindergarten through the 12th grade—"it's also important that Senators, teachers unions, nor anyone else rule out for ideological reasons what could be a useful tool for distributing relief funds. There could be pragmatic reasons to put displaced students in private or parochial schools, if say, school districts are overcrowded, if students have special needs or that happens to be where they ended up, so it might make sense to attach a sum to each student, as long as that sum is given out in a limited number of places and for a limited time, certainly not longer than the current school year. Any solution that would allow students to finish the year with a minimum disruption to themselves and their families, and that would prevent

school districts in Texas and elsewhere from being unduly burdened, should be welcome.”

So I would propose that we, on our committee here—we know very well that we have significant differences of opinion about whether the Federal Government should participate in any kind of voucher program for kindergarten through the 12th grade. I would propose that we not make that argument here. That is not what we are talking about. We can set that off and have that argument another day.

What I propose we look for is a temporary 1-year emergency solution that attaches a sum of money in some way to help each child, all children displaced by Katrina, wherever they find themselves in accredited schools.

So I hope our witnesses today will help us figure out how to do that. You have expertise. You have a view of the whole country, and most importantly, those of you from Louisiana and Mississippi are dealing with that every day. And then I hope we can react quickly because we know you are hiring teachers, you have new bus routes, you have bills to pay, and you have lots of people without any money. So the quicker we can come to a consensus, the quicker we can move and the quicker these children can be helped.

We thank you for coming. Our goal is to help all of Katrina’s schoolchildren in a temporary emergency way and to get on with it.

Senator Dodd.

#### OPENING STATEMENT OF SENATOR DODD

Senator DODD. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman, and thank you for pulling together this committee and holding this hearing in as expeditious a fashion as you have. This is clearly a set of situations here which demand our immediate attention, and I appreciate your doing this.

I am also pleased that Senator Landrieu and Senator Lott could be here. Several of us last Friday went down and spent the day in the region. We were in New Orleans for several hours, and then flew over that city, and then by Blackhawk helicopters, all along the Gulf Coast to Mobile, AL. We had a chance to stop in a couple of places including Pass, Christian and Pascagoula, to get a sense firsthand of the level of devastation. I know the media has covered this extensively, and this often is said—but it is true in this case—it is really hard to capture on film, even great photographs, the extent of the damage and the devastation that has occurred. Obviously, we see it in a physical sense, but what we are talking about here today goes beyond the bricks and mortar, the rebuilding that has to occur, and the kind of damage that can occur to some of the most vulnerable of our citizens, our young people.

So I applaud you for highlighting this issue, and I certainly want to be a part of any effort to provide real assistance to these families and these children immediately.

The numbers are staggering, 372,000 children were displaced by the hurricane. It is a hard number to get your arms around—to realize that many young people are in temporary circumstances at best right now, and many, I presume, are not back at all, and are struggling to find a place with their families to rebuild their lives.

In fact, some who did think they had found safe harbor are packing up again today because of Hurricane Rita. The trauma that this poses for these families is significant.

Public schools across the country, I am proud to say in my own State of Connecticut, have taken in displaced students and are providing them educational opportunities. Like adults, children experience the same feelings of helplessness and lack of control that disaster-related stress can bring about. Unlike adults, however, they have little experience to place their current situation into perspective. Research has shown that a child who lacks proper emotional support is less able to fully recover from a traumatic event such as what was seen in Hurricane Katrina.

For this reason, I think, Mr. Chairman, we must ensure that the emotional supports are in place as quickly as possible for Gulf State residents.

In addition to the displaced students, students already in the receiving schools will also have to adapt. To date, as we have heard, Houston has taken in 2,600 students. Imagine what this does to class size, never mind students' everyday social adjustment. I am particularly grateful for the foresight of this committee and Senators Murray and DeWine, in strengthening the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act, which we reauthorized under the No Children Left Behind Act. McKinney-Vento provides formula grants to States to ensure that homeless children have access to the same free, appropriate public education provided to others. It requires schools to enroll students who are homeless, including those who have lost their homes because of a natural disaster. As an education official in Mississippi recently said in *The Wall Street Journal*, "This law has helped evacuees to enroll in schools without red tape." As she said, "If there were no McKinney-Vento prior to the hurricane, surely the hurricane would have created it."

Having said all of this, we cannot overlook the fact that schools receiving students face a number of serious challenges. Many students are coming to school without educational or immunization records. In the case of special education students, they are arriving without their individualized education plans, as required under IDEA. But, even without these records it is imperative that we provide a smooth transition, or at least as smooth as we can for these displaced students.

The schools that are taking in a large amount of students need our assistance and they need it immediately. Money for additional staff, for additional mental health services, for materials, and for portable classrooms. Waiver authority as it relates specifically to the assessment and corrective action provisions of the No Child Left Behind Act also needs to be considered.

Of course we must acknowledge the schools that have been directly impacted by Katrina, schools that have yet to reopen. Two weeks ago the full committee had a hearing in which Dr. Roussel of the Jefferson Parish in Louisiana said that if you rebuild the schools, they will come. "They" meaning parents, workers, business community leaders. I agree with her on that. We must do all that we can to get cities like New Orleans back on their feet. They need assistance and infrastructure immediately.

Now is the time for all of us to pull together, as you pointed out, Mr. Chairman. It is not a time necessarily, to take advantage of a tragedy to rewrite some of the basic laws of this country. We need to be careful about that possibility and, we must recognize that this is a national tragedy with immediate consequences. If we wait too long or dicker around with some of these provisions, we deny families and children to get back on their feet.

So without endorsing every dotted "i" and crossed "t", Mr. Chairman, because I think we have to be careful how we do this, I think what you have suggested makes sense. It is a deviation from positions I have historically taken regarding vouchers, but I think we need to provide assistance to families and children as soon as we can. I would certainly want to see the details of it. I would want it under a very strict time agreement so if it needs to be extended we can come back and review it. But this is a tragedy, where you are talking about 372,000 children, and after today or tomorrow we may find those numbers going up as a result of what has happened in Texas, or in Louisiana, depending on where this next storm hits.

In my view we have to accommodate this in a way that makes some sense, that is balanced, and that is thoughtful, so it gets kids back on their feet as quickly as possible. I am prepared to work with you. I am confident my colleagues would as well, on both sides of the aisle here to try and provide assistance so that children are not going to be discriminated against as they try to get back on their feet in this very important effort.

I believe of all the issues that need to be addressed, this is the one that demands our attention most immediately. Health would be a close second. But my point is, these children cannot afford to go months without having a certainty of a decent education.

One of the things I hope we look at, by the way, is how we find more people willing to volunteer. I am not sure that the teachers will be back in communities, or that there will be superintendents or custodians. I know in my own State people want to come down and volunteer, retired teachers, people who have been in school districts. We need to call upon Americans who have some skills to go in and fill in the gaps once the assessments are made as to whether or not we have the personnel in place to provide children with as good an environment of education as we possibly can.

With that, Mr. Chairman, let me stop. I want to hear from our witnesses as well, but I want to at least endorse in principle what you are suggesting. I want to work with you. I am very confident Senator Kennedy and others will share similar views with you.

Again, we want to caution here—and you have said it well—time constraints, be careful how we do this, and do not change the generic law, certain generic laws in our country ought not to be changed. *Davis-Bacon*, for instance, I do not think you need to mess around with here. But, we ought to certainly on educational issues be more flexible. I look forward to working with you.

Senator ALEXANDER. Thank you, Senator Dodd. I am not one bit surprised by your attitude, but I greatly appreciate it. I think that will help us enormously in creating a consensus swiftly, so we will pledge to work carefully with you and your staff in the development of whatever we do and stick closely to the principles that you just described.

Senator DODD. Thank you.

Senator ALEXANDER. The chairman of our full committee is Senator Enzi from Wyoming.

#### OPENING STATEMENT OF SENATOR ENZI

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I particularly want to thank you for requesting, organizing, and now leading this hearing. I think it is an outstanding idea, and it will bring out some points that will allow us to sharpen and improve the education bill that we have ready for Katrina.

I want to thank Senator Dodd for his cooperation and for the words he just said. That shows how close together we already are. This committee, I think has moved from being one of the most contentious to being one of the most productive, and——

Senator DODD. We have always been productive.

[Laughter.]

And contentious, and that is one of the reasons why we are productive.

[Laughter.]

The CHAIRMAN. I too had the opportunity to make that trip down to the Gulf States last Friday. I got to spend some time with my colleagues in looking at it, and I have always said that a picture is worth a thousand words, but being on the ground is worth a thousand pictures. We got to talk to people that were concerned about these issues firsthand, while we are looking at the scenes. It was very helpful in bringing us together on a package and this is another piece that needs to be done, and can be done, and we can make sure that the kids are all taken care of.

I appreciate the cooperation of everybody. I would ask my full statement, which is considerably longer, be a part of the record as well. I have to run to one of those meetings right now, so thank you.

Senator ALEXANDER. Thank you, Senator Enzi. The statement will be made a part of the record.

[The prepared statement of Senator Enzi follows:]

#### PREPARED STATEMENT OF SENATOR ENZI

Thank you, Mr. Chairman, for holding this subcommittee hearing and providing us with a much needed opportunity to continue to learn from those who are working on the frontlines to meet the educational needs of the children and their families that have been displaced because of the devastation caused by Hurricane Katrina.

Several of my colleagues and I were able to travel to the New Orleans area just a few days ago to see the damage done by the storm for ourselves. I don't think any of us were fully prepared for what we saw. The pictures we had seen in the paper and on television didn't fully portray what had happened. It is a tragedy that was even worse than it looked on the evening news or in the morning paper.

That is why today's hearing and the HELP Committee roundtable that preceded it have been so important. Using the information we have obtained from the roundtable and what we will learn from today's hearing, we can pursue a comprehensive legislative

approach to address the needs of those students who have been displaced by Hurricane Katrina.

At the top of any agenda for immediate action will be the need to get our children back into school so they can continue their education. Returning to school will give our children a sense of routine that will assure them things are returning to normal and provide them with access to a support system of friends and teachers that will be invaluable as they and their families continue to come to grips with the after-effects of the storm.

That is why we have been working as quickly as we can on a bipartisan basis to develop an education bill that will address the immediate needs of those whose lives have been forever changed by the storm. I have introduced a bill with Senator Kennedy that will provide immediate relief to students and institutions affected by Hurricane Katrina. This includes providing support to the communities throughout the country that have welcomed countless numbers of displaced families and children with open arms and open hearts, and provided them with the essentials they will need until they are able to return home.

As we hold this hearing today, there are people from the Gulf region spread throughout the country and forced to depend on the kindness and goodwill of people they have never met before. Seeing so many Americans, from all walks of life, respond as they have and reach out to help those in need, gives me a clearer picture than I have ever seen before of what is right with America. It's a scene that gives me confidence that we will be able to rebuild and restore what was lost and return the people of New Orleans and the Gulf Coast to their homes.

In the days since Katrina took such a heavy toll in Louisiana and the Gulf region, the Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions Committee has met with over 100 representatives of the education community—from preschool through higher education. We have consulted with the Red Cross, the Salvation Army and other community service organizations. We have heard their stories and listened to what they saw firsthand. We have asked for and obtained their advice and their suggestions on how to deal with the after-effects of this storm, and what we must do to be better prepared for some future disaster.

The HELP Committee roundtable helped to identify the specific challenges that schools in the impacted areas and in the communities across the country that are receiving students from these affected areas, are experiencing. We heard Dr. Diane Roussel, Superintendent of Jefferson Parrish Public Schools, describe the devastation to her community and the important role that the schools will play in rebuilding New Orleans, and the nearby communities. Schools are the heart of the community and without them people will hesitate to return to those areas with their families.

The roundtable took the first step down this road. Today's hearing will take another.

As we prepare to act, we must be sure we have carefully defined what our target is, develop a strategy to meet it, and then provide the resources that will be needed to get us there. Failing to plan is planning to fail in the long run and we need strategies to meet

both the short- and long-term needs of the people of the Gulf region whose lives have been forever changed by the storm.

If we meet the challenge, we will have assured those who lost so much to the storm that there is a reason to hope and a date certain by which they will be able to return to their homes and the way of life they have come to know and love. Failure, once again, is not an option.

As we work together to rebuild our schools and breathe new life into the communities they serve, we must ensure we are taking the most effective and fiscally responsible path possible. While we need to do everything we can to ensure increased flexibility, we must also demand complete accountability.

The task before us is daunting. We have limited resources and we are faced with almost unlimited need. I look forward to the testimony from today's witnesses and the discussion that will follow on how we can best focus our efforts to ensure our children's educational needs will continue to be addressed.

In that effort, the suggestions and experience of our witnesses will be invaluable. I want to again share with them all how much we appreciate their attendance and their participation. Working together I have every confidence we can meet this challenge.

Senator ALEXANDER. Now we will move to Assistant Secretary Henry Johnson, who I previously introduced, who is Assistant Secretary of the Office of Elementary and Secondary Education for the U.S. Department of Education, and until recently was the Chief State School officer of Mississippi, one of the two States most affected by Katrina.

Mr. Johnson, you have heard what Senator Dodd and Senator Enzi and I have said. We have a consensus on principle. What we hope you and the other witnesses will help us do is write the details in a way that do not violate those principles. So we are looking forward to your specific technical assistance on just how to do this.

**STATEMENT OF HENRY L. JOHNSON, ASSISTANT SECRETARY  
FOR ELEMENTARY AND SECONDARY EDUCATION, U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION**

Mr. JOHNSON. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. I think as I get into my presentation that you will appreciate what the President's proposal has in it. Thank you very much.

Mr. Chairman and members of the subcommittee, thank you for the opportunity to discuss how to make sure that each and every child affected by the hurricane gets the quality education he or she deserves and needs.

Initial reports indicate 372,000 students were displaced, and 312,000 remain away from their homes and schools. Forty-nine States and the District of Columbia have welcomed these children and their families.

Leading the Education Department's response has been one of my first duties assigned since joining the Department a little over 6 weeks ago. When I left as State Superintendent of Mississippi, I had no idea that I would be going back as often, certainly to deal with this kind of issue.

Over the last several weeks I visited both Mississippi and Louisiana several times, and let me tell you what I have observed, obviously, the enormous damage. And you are right, if you have not seen it, you cannot fully appreciate the devastation. But I have also witnessed tremendous response, response from all over the country, and, Chairman Alexander, I am sure that you saw the same when Hurricane Andrew came ashore during your tenure as Secretary of Education.

I have spoken with State and local officials in both Mississippi and Louisiana, almost on a daily basis. When I first went to Mississippi, as I walked into the auditorium at Biloxi High School, certainly I encountered colleagues and friends. What struck me so deeply was one of the local superintendents came up to me with tears in her eyes, and she grabbed me by the arms and said, "Henry," that's my name, but she said, "You have got to help us get these kids back in school." And she said, "I don't have faculty who have homes and clothes. We don't have buildings. But somehow we've got to get these kids back in school. Please help."

We have listened to what school officials have said. We have listened to their needs. They want us to provide fast, flexible assistance to them. In this regard the Secretary has set up an internal response team, headed by a senior official. She has assigned people to be on the ground in both Mississippi and Louisiana, and I have been tasked with being the primary contact person for both those States. I am confident that in order to meet the needs from those States—and not only those two but the other affected States and the receiving States—the President's proposal is the best way to provide this fast, efficient relief for children and their schools.

As you know, Federal responsibility for rebuilding schools is assigned to FEMA and not to Department of Education. But school authorities throughout our country have many other needs that the Education Department is already helping them address. For example, we have launched the Hurricane Help for Schools Web site, and this Web site helps to match the needs of affected schools with those who want to provide assistance, and in just a few days we have matched more than 120 businesses, organizations, and schools with supplies for these needy schools. As Secretary Spellings has said, we want schools to welcome these students with both compassion and high expectations.

In recent days we have announced a number of waivers for Mississippi, Louisiana, and Texas, and we presume more will follow on a case-by-case basis. Let me hasten to say the Secretary has been very, very clear that she does not expect to give any blanket waivers. We have had requests for waivers, and we will address those as these requests come in and as warranted, but we have no intention of doing blanket waivers. But let me tell you what she has waived, some examples at least.

She has granted requests from Mississippi and Louisiana to waive the title I "maintenance of effort" requirement. She has granted a 12-month extension of the time Mississippi and Louisiana have—

Senator ALEXANDER. Mr. Johnson, that means that Mississippi and Louisiana do not have to come up with their share of the money for title I?

Mr. JOHNSON. That is correct, sir. She has granted a 12-month extension of the time Mississippi and Louisiana have to obligate funds awarded under ESEA. The original deadline was September 30, so she has extended that. She has granted to Texas a request to extend their annual performance report deadline. We are also being flexible with No Child Left Behind timelines for reporting and monitoring.

However, by law, the Department can only be so flexible. The Secretary has limited authority to weigh provisions of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, and she has almost no authority to weigh provisions of the Perkins Vocational and Technical Education Act, or the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act. That is why we are asking for broad waiver authority for the Secretary to help students and school systems recover from this disaster. But let me say very clearly and caution again, there is no desire to do blanket waivers, and we certainly do not want to do any waivers that impact negatively on civil rights or safety issues.

Thousands of school systems will have unexpected costs as a result of this disaster. To help areas that are enrolling significant numbers of displaced children, President Bush has proposed that districts enrolling at least 10 evacuated students would receive one-time payments of up to \$7,500 per student in Federal funds, up to 1.9 billion to pay for the full instructional cost for every displaced child in grade K–12. We would give districts the flexibility to spend the money on their most pressing needs, whether it is for school supplies, or transportation, or teacher salaries. We heard these requests a lot from people in Mississippi and Louisiana: free tutoring and special services for children with disabilities. These funds would also cover counseling for students suffering with mental health related issues and anything generated as a result of this trauma of the hurricane.

Given what these kids and their families have gone through in the past few weeks, the most important issue is to get kids back in school, to bring that normalcy to their lives.

We are proposing one time emergency replacements of up to 90 percent of the State's average per student expenditure or up to \$7,500 for a total of \$488 million. The administration's proposal gives the same payment for each student, no matter whether they are attending public or private schools, and again, it is only for 1 year.

As public school districts enroll large numbers of displaced students, they face problems of overcrowding and a shortage of teachers. As of September 21st, the Department has received reports from officials in at least four States identifying classroom space and/or teachers as problems in their school districts: Alabama, Arkansas, Tennessee and Texas. Also, as you may know, almost one-fourth of the students in the hardest hit Louisiana communities attended private schools. Nationally only about 1 in 10 attend private schools. We believe firmly that since the hurricane did not distinguish between public and private schools in its devastation, we should not distinguish in our extraordinary attempts to address those needs.

So in conclusion, Mr. Chairman, as I am sure you will agree, we must make sure that students receive a quality education during

this difficult time. We are faced with an extraordinary situation. I look forward to our continued discussion on how to provide an equally extraordinary Federal response, and I will be happy to respond to questions.

Senator ALEXANDER. Thank you, Mr. Johnson.

I will ask a few questions, and I will ask Senator Dodd to ask whatever questions he would like. And I see Senator Sessions is here. Perhaps, Senator Sessions, would you like to make a brief opening remark before we go ahead?

Senator SESSIONS. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I think not. I will just make my remarks in my questioning. Thank you for bringing this issue up. It is very real in Alabama. I think we have 5,000 students that are evacuees. I visited personally in Bayou La Batre, our seafood area that was hit so hard. Their school was flooded. It is a very real problem, and I thank you for highlighting the issue.

Senator ALEXANDER. Senator Kennedy and Enzi have been here, and before you Senator Dodd—he can speak for himself—but he said a little earlier that we have a consensus on principle, which is for a short-term emergency basis help all the children. What we are trying to figure out here is what are the details to make sure we stick to our principles.

I have a few short questions, Mr. Johnson. You have been very responsive, the Department has, but may I ask you to help make sure that you yourself and others in the Department work with Kristin Bannerman and our minority staff over the next few days so we can move as rapidly as possible as we get your technical assistance.

Mr. JOHNSON. Certainly.

Senator ALEXANDER. You have done that so far, but we are on as fast a track as long as we have a consensus. The \$7,500 figure, where did that come from?

Mr. JOHNSON. That is the average per student expense in the affected areas.

Senator ALEXANDER. So that would be the maximum per student?

Mr. JOHNSON. Up to that amount, yes, sir.

Senator ALEXANDER. And your recommendation is for a single year?

Mr. JOHNSON. Yes, sir.

Senator ALEXANDER. And is it your intention that this is temporary, a temporary 1-year law rather than a permanent change in the way the Federal Government runs?

Mr. JOHNSON. That is correct.

Senator ALEXANDER. You have mentioned you need additional authority for waivers. Have you drafted the language that the Secretary thinks she needs for broad waiver authority?

Mr. JOHNSON. Our staff has been working with staff members in Congress, yes, sir.

Senator ALEXANDER. That again is temporary waiver authority to be applied for the children in this disaster; is that correct?

Mr. JOHNSON. Yes, that is correct.

Senator ALEXANDER. You did not mention it, and this hearing is not about it, but I think it is important to know that the President has also proposed please—describe your proposals for college stu-

dents. There are 73,000 college students who are displaced, both in terms of the money for the receiving colleges and for interest on student loans.

Mr. JOHNSON. Thank you. The Secretary has emergency support for affected postsecondary institutions including community colleges, to help postsecondary institutions in these areas operate quickly and effectively, approximately 90 million to approximately 31 colleges, universities, community colleges and proprietary schools. There is also an entrance forbearance for affected borrowers, a recommendation that would forgive 6 months of interest on all student loans for borrowers living in a disaster area, in the affected areas.

Senator ALEXANDER. Thank you. I know that is outside your area of responsibility.

Mr. JOHNSON. Yes.

Senator ALEXANDER. Senator Kennedy, I believe, said that there are a thousand displaced students in Massachusetts colleges, and my understanding of the President's proposal is the students of Boston College who were at Loyola—\$1,000 would go to the receiving college.

Mr. JOHNSON. That is the third thing, yes, sir.

Senator ALEXANDER. And that anyone who lives in the affected States of Alabama, Louisiana, and Mississippi, who are paying a student loan would have 6 months forgiveness on that student loan. Is my understanding correct?

Mr. JOHNSON. That is correct.

Senator ALEXANDER. One other question. You have suggested that the money for the public schools go to the school districts, but in the case of Louisiana and Mississippi, that it go to the States themselves. Do you want to elaborate on that?

Mr. JOHNSON. Yes. Just briefly, first of all, this is one of the requests from each of those States, and we are trying to be responsive, but more importantly, these students may not stay in a particular area of their first landing, so to speak. After 2, 3, 4 months, they may go to another place, and we want to have the flexibility to make sure that the area where the student is actually being educated gets the benefit of those dollars.

Senator ALEXANDER. Am I correct that your proposal for the students who find themselves in private schools is that you would give the grants to the States, and then the States would then distribute the money to—

Mr. JOHNSON. Families, yes, sir.

Senator ALEXANDER. To families, some of whom might be in private schools.

Mr. JOHNSON. That is correct.

Senator ALEXANDER. My last question is this. I notice that you have a means test for the private school students, that not all families would be eligible for that. I wonder about that. One of the things it seems we need to do here is to make things as simple as possible, and one of the advantages of the President's proposal, it seems to me, is that it is very simple and straightforward. It is just a sum of money following a child to a school. If you add a means test, does that not add a complication? And too, is it even necessary in a case like this because if a child suddenly finds himself dis-

placed from a Catholic school in New Orleans, they probably already paid tuition there for the year, and then they are in Baton Rouge and they have to pay another tuition there, and they may not have a job and their house might have just blown away. I mean what difference? Why do we need a means test?

Mr. JOHNSON. We have had discussion about that, and the Secretary thinks that this is one way to address the issue that even though there has been devastation, some people may be better able to handle these situations than other families. But I know the Secretary wants to get as much help to as many students and families as possible.

Senator ALEXANDER. Would it be possible that the provision could allow the States to create—that the Secretary's discretion could allow Mississippi and Louisiana, if they so choose, to adopt the means test, but if they find that it does not make sense to adopt a means test or it creates additional complications, that they might just go ahead and do it without a means test?

Mr. JOHNSON. I am sure she would be willing to work with you on that.

Senator ALEXANDER. Thank you very much.

Senator Dodd.

Senator DODD. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Thank you, Mr. Johnson. It was a shock to have come to Washington and find within a matter of days you are back down in Mississippi.

Mr. JOHNSON. Yes, sir.

Senator DODD. A couple things come to mind. Putting aside the specifics of the bill and how the money would work, it seems to me—I would make this case not just in the area of education but across the board—there needs to be a management operation in place here to oversee the accountability of a lot of this at the outset, not just after the fact. I am wondering, Mr. Chairman, if any consideration has been given to this. I know you have been sort of designated, at least temporarily, to handle this, but obviously you have been brought into the Department of Education to handle other national issues of education which need to be attended to in the midst of all of this.

Mr. JOHNSON. That is correct.

Senator DODD. Can we consider whether or not it would make sense to have someone designated permanently over the next year or 2 to help manage this, to set up a structure here so that we would have people we can deal with. I think one of the most confusing things lately is who is in charge. You have mayors and governors and you have Admiral Allen. For those of us watching all of this, it seems there is sort of a bickering going on back and forth as to who is calling the shots on a lot of this stuff. One of my concerns is that we are going to write a lot of checks here over the next year or 2 or more, and at some point we are going to go back and try to account for all of this.

Granted, it is never going to be perfect when you are trying to respond. I think the chairman is right, you do not want to get terribly complicated, but I am sort of hoping we might be able to set up an operation here that would raise the level of confidence that people have as to how this is all working, and obviously, it should

come, in my view, out of the Department of Education. Hopefully, we would want someone designated with experience in these crisis management areas with a strong background in education.

For instance, school construction, with all due respect, FEMA has a lot of obligations, but having school construction under FEMA does not make a lot of sense to me when you consider what has to be done on the kind of needs you would have. Having someone that is moving under the Department of Education, where you are going to have someone much more sensitized to what school construction should involve here in the short-term, is an example of what I am talking about. I wonder if you might comment on this as a general proposition?

Mr. JOHNSON. The Secretary is very concerned that these dollars go to the purpose for which they are designed, and we want to make sure that there is—even though this is an extraordinary circumstance, that we do not overlook normal accounting principles, and that we in fact pay even more attention to how these dollars are used. In terms of having someone to work as sort of a clerk of the works, quite frankly, we have not discussed that, but that would be something that we should be certainly willing to try to figure out if there is something we can do and how we could go about doing it.

Senator DODD. Sooner than later, because if we move pretty quickly here it would be helpful to have that—not that it has to be part of legislation. It seems to me in circumstances like this, having the Department set up the apparatus and designate people would make an awful lot of sense.

And also making assessments. Again, we should not be waiting for the assessments to decide what we need to do here, but I suspect that as you go down to these areas, that even some of the harder-hit areas may be responding to this in different ways. It may have been that there are structures in place that would accommodate students here. Other places, the devastation may not have been great, but for other reasons they are having problems that need to be addressed.

I would hope that we are getting that kind of solid assessment as to what the needs are as quickly as we can, so that while we draft the legislation, we are making sure that the right agencies are in charge of the right aspects of all of this. So we do not find 6 months from now this is turning into a bureaucratic mess and a lot of wasted money. We do not want to watch public reaction against some of these things despite the strong support today to do everything we can to help.

So I would urge you to carry that message back. And I would be interested, Mr. Chairman, hearing back from the Department as to how they might respond to some of these suggestions about a structural framework that would then allow our legislation to be able to be more efficient in its operation.

Senator ALEXANDER. Well, if I could interject, I think Senator Dodd has an excellent idea, and I like the way he suggested it. I agree, I think it is unwieldy to make it a part of the legislation. However, we can—before we pass the legislation or before we report a bill to the full Senate, I think it would be helpful for us to

hear from the Secretary how she proposes to deal with what Senator Dodd has just suggested. That would be step one.

If we are going to come up with \$2.6 billion, more or less, for 1 year of emergency money, who is the single person that we can look to who is responsible for knowing how that money is spent. And then, Senator Dodd, I would suggest that perhaps every quarter over the next year that our subcommittee have a hearing or a roundtable discussion with Secretary Johnson and that person, and conduct a little oversight of our own about how things are going.

So would it be possible for you to get back to us as we put this bill together, and tell us how you would respond to Senator Dodd?

Mr. JOHNSON. Absolutely, and the Secretary, in the Secretary's proposal is quarterly payouts anyway, so that would be very consistent with what you have said, and we have had from the States very specific facility needs that have gone to FEMA, but they also send it to us to try to help expedite it, and I am sure the Secretary would be willing to discuss this idea with you further.

Senator DODD. Now, the school construction, I made the comment about having that moved to education and getting it out of FEMA. Do you agree with that?

Mr. JOHNSON. Normally those issues are not issues that the Department works with, and even States tend not to deal with construction issues. They tend to deal with operational issues. So that would be a new role, and I would have to go back and talk with the Secretary about that.

Senator DODD. It is a temporary thing we are talking about here now. But you understood the point I was making a moment ago?

Mr. JOHNSON. Yes, yes.

Senator DODD. There is not a lot of sophistication in my view in FEMA for a lot of things, but certainly school construction does not strike me as one of their levels of expertise.

Mr. JOHNSON. As a matter of operating principle, we want to be as helpful as we possibly can to getting kids back in school and getting a quality education.

Senator DODD. Thanks, Mr. Chairman.

Senator ALEXANDER. Thank you, Senator Dodd.

Senator SESSIONS.

Senator SESSIONS. Thank you.

Mr. Johnson, it is a pleasure to be with you, and thank you for your opening statement and your concern. We have a lot of school systems that are in real crisis. Last week, we had superintendents in tears just describing the devastation that they have had, and I have certainly seen that in Alabama. We have a big 60,000 student system in Mobile County where many of the roofs are damaged and some significant—maybe not fatal structural damage, but a lot of damage that they are going to have to absorb.

I would like to associate myself with the chairman and Senator Dodd's comments about a manager. I have offered a resolution that the President designate a coordinator or manager for the whole thing, and I would assume each agency really probably should do the same. I think it has a lot of merit, as things can get out of control.

Let me ask you a few things to get my mind straight on what we are talking about. You have been stressing the need, which I

think is vital, to get kids back into school as soon as possible. Now, is your goal to get them back into the school in Biloxi, in Ocean Springs, in Bayou La Batre, or any school if they are in Knoxville or Connecticut or North Alabama or where?

Mr. JOHNSON. Certainly the priority would be to get them back into their own former environments if those environments are safe, but we want to get them in school wherever and as quickly as possible because that will help create normalcy in their environment.

Senator SESSIONS. I agree with you there a lot, and frankly, even if the school was 90 percent okay and not complete, it might be better to have them back in their home and in their home school than being away, unless perhaps they chose to stay there in a distant school.

But there is a question, Mr. Chairman, of money. You know, the more you spend keeping kids away from their school, the less you have to spend to fix up the schools and get the school ready where they might like to be permanently. So I think we need to think about that. There is no free lunch here.

Let me ask you this. Let us ask about how the schools that will be receiving evacuee children will be paid. If they have 10 students, I understand you to say, they would be eligible for some compensation?

Mr. JOHNSON. At least 10, correct.

Senator SESSIONS. Ten. Would that be from K through 12 or K through 4?

Mr. JOHNSON. Any configuration.

Senator SESSIONS. Whatever the size of the school is?

Mr. JOHNSON. Any configuration, yes.

Senator SESSIONS. So if it's a K through 12, you would have to have 10?

Mr. JOHNSON. Yes.

Senator SESSIONS. And you are prepared to pay that school 90 percent of what they calculate the average cost per student is to accommodate those students?

Mr. JOHNSON. Yes.

Senator SESSIONS. I think that would be beneficial to a number of my schools, I assume, and other States too, but how did we decide that? Is 90 percent, where did we get this figure?

Mr. JOHNSON. The idea was to contribute in this extraordinary circumstance, Federal dollars to instructional costs, and the infrastructure facilities and so forth we calculate would be about the other 10 percent, and FEMA would handle that part.

Senator SESSIONS. So that would be the instructional cost.

Mr. JOHNSON. Right.

Senator SESSIONS. Do you know what the average school might be?

Mr. JOHNSON. Seventy-five hundred is the figure that we have for the affected areas.

Senator SESSIONS. What if a child is in this school for 3 months, and then returns back home to Louisiana or South Mississippi; does it get the full 75 or a proportional amount, \$7,500 or a proportional amount?

Mr. JOHNSON. Remember the money will go out on a quarterly basis if this is approved, and doing it that way allows us the flexi-

bility that we were talking about earlier. We heard from people on the ground, local folk and State level help, "We need help. We need money, and we need flexibility. We need for you to be very responsive." And we felt that this was one of the ways that we could give them the help that they need in as quick and orderly and flexible fashion as possible. They like what we have proposed.

Senator SESSIONS. It is a pretty good deal, frankly. Let us say you have first through sixth grades and you have 10 students, and you may not need to hire a single new teacher and you already have enough desks for each one of those 10 new students. You just plug them in the school system and you pick up \$75,000 if they stay there 6 months or—

Mr. JOHNSON. Yes, they have to stay the school year.

Senator SESSIONS. 7 months?

Mr. JOHNSON. Yes, stay the school year. But as you know, the devastation is great and—

Senator SESSIONS. This is not the devastation. I am talking about a school in Knoxville, where people left or went to Montgomery or to Mobile from Bayou La Batre or something. You are talking about money, are we not, that is going to the nonimpacted schools? Some of them may have had impact because they may be—

Mr. JOHNSON. That is right.

Senator SESSIONS. [continuing]. Partially damaged but not shut down.

Mr. JOHNSON. Correct.

Senator SESSIONS. I am just saying they need to be compensated. This is a national service to take these kids in. I am proud Governor Riley said we will take every child. We may get paid or not get paid, whatever, we are taking those children. In our community colleges, we are taking them. Maybe we will be paid, maybe we will not be paid, but we are not going to turn anybody down. I think that is the national spirit right now, and I respect that.

Is my time up? Yes, it is.

Senator ALEXANDER. Go ahead, Senator Sessions if you have other questions.

Senator SESSIONS. With regard to your colleges, I had a meeting with Congressman Joe Bonner on the Friday after the hurricane with President Gordon Moulton at the University of South Alabama, Father Foley at Spring Hill College, a Jesuit College in Mobile, and Dr. Mark Foley at University of Mobile. One of the things they shared greatest concern about is that they are afraid that kids whose families have taken big losses and who are nervous about what is happening, might drop out of school for real or imagined monetary reasons when they really should not. Their thought is that it would probably be a mistake for a lot of these children to drop out of college, and they may not get back in and may be delayed for longer periods of time. And for most of them they would do better to stay in and see if we could figure out a way to help them stay in.

You have the loan money. Are there any other things that would help a school counselor to share with a student that might encourage them to not go back home necessarily, but stay in college?

Mr. JOHNSON. Well, the three things that I mentioned earlier for students in college are the three things that I know about, but I will get a response from the people who work in that area to you as soon as we get back to the office.

Senator SESSIONS. I salute you for your firm position that all children should be treated equally, that children who are in parochial schools—we have a lot in New Orleans particularly—that they should be able to participate in this program. Frankly, I think that is just critical. Maybe 25 percent of the students are in Catholic schools in that area, so I think that is important.

Mr. Chairman, I thank you.

Senator ALEXANDER. Thank you, Senator Sessions.

Senator DODD, do you have any other questions of Mr. Johnson before he—

Senator DODD. No, thank you. I am sure I do, but I think we ought to move along. We have a good panel coming up next. This is ongoing. But I would appreciate you getting back to us immediately about some of the issues we raised earlier, because I think they are very, very important.

Mr. JOHNSON. Yes, thank you.

Senator DODD. In our consideration as we move forward with the legislation, so that would be helpful.

Senator ALEXANDER. I have just one question following up Senator Sessions. Let us take the Houston Independent School District, which has 4,700 displaced students, hired 180 new teachers, added 37 bus routes and ordered 10,000 new textbooks. So if we were to suddenly today pass the President's proposal, the Houston Independent School District could come to you and get up to \$7,500 or 90 percent of the per pupil expenditure in Texas, but not more than \$7,500?

Mr. JOHNSON. Correct.

Senator ALEXANDER. For each of those students.

Mr. JOHNSON. That is correct, assuming they stay the year.

Senator ALEXANDER. What if they only stay half a year? They just get paid for half, Houston just gets one check?

Mr. JOHNSON. Remember, the money will go out on a quarterly basis, so if the students are not there after that accounting period, then they do not get any more money.

Senator ALEXANDER. I wonder if these teachers they have hired are on an annual contract, which teachers usually are. So they may be stuck with the teachers but not have the students if they go home.

Mr. JOHNSON. That is possible, but in most school districts, and particularly large school districts, because of normal influx of students and students who leave, those things sort of average out unless there is a catastrophic occurrence. There usually is not that much of a swing in student population.

Senator ALEXANDER. Let us say the children do go home after one semester from Houston, that that would be their normal impulse? Let us say they go back to the Pascagoula High School. Trent Lott said it could be open maybe before too long. So they go back for the second semester there. Does Pascagoula High School get money under this proposal, or is that a separate kind of Federal issue?

Mr. JOHNSON. We do not plan to pay twice for the same kid, certainly not beyond \$7,500.

Senator ALEXANDER. But say half of it goes to Houston for the first two quarters. Then for the second two quarters that child finds himself or herself back home. Is this proposal to envision that, or is this just for those 372,000 children who are displaced?

Mr. JOHNSON. It is for the displaced—

Senator ALEXANDER. When they go back to their home school, this program ends and we go back to our—

Senator DODD. Title I, the title I provisions that you talked about would still apply for that student in Pascagoula I presume at this point?

Mr. JOHNSON. Yes.

Senator DODD. So they would not be requiring the State match in that case, which would help that school district, allow them to get some assistance directly; is that right?

Mr. JOHNSON. I think that is—I will have to—

Senator ALEXANDER. Could you help us, make sure we think about that?

Mr. JOHNSON. Yes.

Senator ALEXANDER. We do not want to create incentives for students to stay away longer than they should, and we want to understand that clearly before we—

Mr. JOHNSON. And all of this still requires some additional detailing.

Senator DODD. Does it ever. I would also like to know very specifically the waiver requests that you will be making. You mentioned some of them already, and I heard you say “no blanket waivers” that would be requested, but I would like to know the detailed request for waivers. I am sure my colleagues would as well here.

Senator ALEXANDER. Thank you, Mr.—

Senator SESSIONS. Senator, again, to follow up.

Senator ALEXANDER. Senator Sessions.

Senator SESSIONS. What about students who may decide to stay more than a year, and this is a 1-year program, and then you get 38 Texas Congressmen descending on you saying we need to pay another year.

Mr. JOHNSON. We have actually had conversation about that, Senator, and this proposal—

Senator SESSIONS. Not Senators, they would not do that.

[Laughter.]

Mr. JOHNSON. This proposal is for 1 year, and as we get more information, you and we will decide further what else needs to be done or if anything else needs to be done. But this only addresses 1 year.

Senator SESSIONS. I think you do well to be clear about it because if you do not say it is absolutely 1 year, they are going to come back next year. And at some point a child becomes a resident, you know?

Mr. JOHNSON. Yes.

Senator SESSIONS. They decide they are going to be a Texan. The Harris County School Superintendent told us he had 900 students, and what they were hearing from the students was they were not going back. He said, frankly, we are hearing they intend to stay.

I do not know if they will, but that is what they are saying, so it is a realistic possibility.

Senator ALEXANDER. I think that is a good point. My sense of things is—and we can each speak for ourselves—it would be my feeling that this is a 1-year temporary program, and when it is over, we go back to the way we were.

Senator DODD. It would take an act of Congress.

[Laughter.]

Senator ALEXANDER. And I think it is important for school administrators to understand that.

Senator DODD. They really have to understand that.

Senator ALEXANDER. And I think we also are not attempting—we want to help every single displaced Katrina child, but we do not want to build in incentives to keep them from doing what they normally would do, which in many cases, I would suspect most, is go back where they were from. Now, maybe they will, maybe they will not, but we do not want to build in an incentive to stay away. I for one, do not think we are likely to get consensus on this type of legislation unless it is clear that it is a single year emergency disaster relief for the Katrina schoolchildren.

Senator SESSIONS. Could I share one thing that is important? The group that I am worried most about, there are a few school systems really impacted by evacuees. For most it is a fairly modest increase of students for them, frankly, but it is those students in home counties that depend on sales tax, and the businesses are shut down, who depend on property tax and other things that are not coming in, and they have all these repairs that they have to do. And so in truth, we need to be sure we focus more on the districts where they are going to be receiving those kids coming back as soon as possible. They have lost revenue as well as having damages to their school, and they are trying to attract the students back promptly and get them settled.

And so incentivizing that for the students who want to come back I think should be a pretty high priority.

Thank you, Mr. Johnson, for being here. You are welcome to stay, or if you need to leave, we certainly understand that.

Mr. JOHNSON. Thank you.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Johnson follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF HENRY L. JOHNSON

Mr. Chairman and members of the subcommittee, thank you for the opportunity to report on the efforts of the Department of Education to help States and school districts meet the educational needs of students and families displaced by Hurricane Katrina. This is a most timely subject, and I truly appreciate the opportunity to discuss the current situation in the affected States, how the Department is helping State and local officials cope with the aftermath of the hurricane, and the President's proposals for assisting schools to educate children displaced by the hurricane and for helping communities in the disaster area reopen their schools as quickly as possible.

**The Situation in Louisiana, Mississippi, and Other Affected States**

Mr. Chairman, in many ways, Hurricane Katrina was an event perhaps unlike any in our Nation's history, because of the sheer magnitude of the storm and subsequent flooding and the great number of people affected. The hurricane and the floods damaged or destroyed so many homes, businesses, communications networks, public health facilities, and, of course, schools, colleges, and universities. As Congress has already recognized, through the rapid approval of two emergency supplemental appropriations bills, a disaster of this magnitude calls for a national re-

sponse, with strong Federal leadership. To lead that response, President Bush has announced a plan to provide the financial and other resources that will be needed to assist the many victims of the storm and to restore the infrastructure of the Gulf Coast region. As the President told the American people last week, we will work in close partnership with the States of Louisiana and Mississippi, the city of New Orleans, and other Gulf Coast communities, so that they can rebuild in a sensible, well-planned way, getting the job done quickly and wisely, and with the Federal Government shouldering the great majority of the costs. Just as important, the President's plan includes major assistance to communities that have taken in evacuated families, part of which involves reimbursement of their schools.

At Secretary Spellings' direction, high-level Department officials have spent many days recently in the Gulf Coast region, viewing the situation and working with State and local officials to determine how we can best be of assistance. In addition, Deputy Secretary Ray Simon and I are in constant communication with the chief State school officers in the most affected States, and the Secretary participated in a conference call with all chief State school officers in order to gain a better understanding of the impact of this disaster on schools nationwide.

In the last 2 weeks, I visited Biloxi, Baton Rouge, and De Soto County, a northern Mississippi county that is absorbing a number of evacuated families. These visits helped me get an on-the-ground sense of the current situation in affected communities and a better understanding of what K-12 educators in the region need from the Department and the Federal Government. I found that the news reports and even the television pictures do not begin to convey the devastation wrought by the hurricane and its aftermath. And local educators, because they feel responsible for our children, who are so much of the Nation's future, are among the most deeply affected. In Biloxi, teachers, principals, and school superintendents came up to me, literally with tears in their eyes, to discuss what the disaster had done to their schools, their programs, and their students. Having previously served as superintendent of schools for the State of Mississippi, I was affected very personally and very emotionally by what I saw down there.

School districts in the path of the hurricane, where so many schools have been shut down, obviously have a major and immediate need for assistance in rebuilding. As you know, under legislation passed by Congress a decade ago, Federal responsibility for rebuilding schools, and for providing trailers and other temporary facilities in response to a natural disaster, is assigned to FEMA, not the Department of Education. But school authorities in the affected States have many other needs, which they are conveying to me and to the other officials of the Department who have been to the region.

Perhaps the most important immediate need is for assistance in educating the estimated 372,000 school children displaced by Katrina. By our count, 49 States and the District of Columbia have taken in displaced families and enrolled their children in their public schools. Of those, nine States have more than 1,000 displaced students in their schools. Other children are being taken in by private schools around the country. For some districts and schools, the number of displaced children suddenly enrolled is very significant, and this has resulted in strained local resources. No one, of course, had budgeted for this additional need when the school year began. I truly commend all the local school authorities who have enrolled displaced students and are working so hard to care for and educate them. But it is incumbent on us to provide them financial compensation for doing so.

State and local officials have also sought the Department's help, and the help of one another, in working through an array of other difficult issues. For example, districts have enrolled many children with disabilities without having on hand the Individualized Education Programs (IEPs) that document their needs and the special services those students were entitled to receive; those documents were sometimes literally washed away in the storm. The States and districts have sought guidance from our Office of Special Education Programs on how to deal with this issue. Receiving districts are also enrolling many 12th graders, who face special challenges in completing their graduation requirements, sometimes passing a high school exit exam, and often in assembling transcripts and teacher recommendations to send to colleges, even when the transcripts have been lost and the teachers are scattered across many States. State and local administrators are working together to solve these problems. We thank them, and we are doing what we can to help them.

#### **Department of Education Response**

In addition to requesting funding, officials from the most-affected States have asked for our assistance on a number of difficult issues, especially issues of compliance with Federal requirements in light of the disaster. We have tried to respond to these requests as quickly as possible, and to provide the affected States with the

maximum available flexibility. As Deputy Secretary Simon recently put it, we want to leave all the red tape in the drawer, and give the States and school districts the flexibility they need in dealing with a unique and difficult situation.

Each of three most affected States has sent us requests for waivers of the Federal requirements that it believes pose the biggest problems in meeting needs resulting from the hurricane. The Department has considered each of these requests very carefully, but has also tried to get back to the States as quickly as possible. In recent days, we have announced a number of new policies, with more to follow. Some of these are:

- Mississippi and Louisiana requested a waiver of the title I “maintenance-of-effort” requirement for affected districts, because those districts will not have the fiscal resources available to meet that requirement. Secretary Spellings has notified the States that we are willing to grant that request.

- Those two States have also requested an extension of the amount of time available for using certain Federal funds because, with the immediate need to deal with hurricane-related issues, the States may not be able to obligate those funds in the time that would normally be available. The Secretary provided an immediate 1-year extension of the deadline for obligating Elementary and Secondary Education Act funds that would otherwise lapse at the end of this month, and made a commitment to work with the States to ease future funding deadlines if that need arises.

- Texas and Louisiana requested an extension of a number of the deadlines for submission of the reports required under the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, as amended by No Child Left Behind, and under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). We agreed that, in an emergency situation, it would be entirely appropriate to extend most of those deadlines, and we are doing so.

- In order to make it easier for the Nation’s charter schools to enroll displaced students (and thus both ease the strain on regular public schools and give parents of those children additional choices), we have clarified that charter schools that receive Federal funds may, in their admissions lotteries, give priority to displaced students. We have also offered those schools approximately \$20 million in additional fiscal year 2005 funding to serve displaced students.

I should also add a few points regarding waiver requests from the States. The first is that, in many cases, we have determined that no Federal waiver is needed. The Department has, instead, quickly responded to requests for these waivers with clarification of the flexibility already available to States under the law.

A second point is that, on some issues, particularly requests for waivers of some of the key provisions of the No Child Left Behind Act, our consideration may be taking a little more time, but we still expect to respond on a very rapid basis. The Secretary has stated that she has no intention of granting a nationwide waiver of the accountability provisions of NCLB. Likewise, she has stated that the situation in the affected States does not necessitate a wholesale abandonment of the key NCLB provisions, even for 1 year. That would be an unwise policy and a retreat from NCLB’s commitment to holding schools accountable for the education of all students. However, as I stated earlier, we want to provide flexibility during what we recognize is a very difficult period in some of the States.

My final point in this area is that there are some provisions we might like to waive, but cannot. Our authority to waive provisions of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act is somewhat limited and, for other statutes, such as the Perkins Vocational and Technical Education Act and the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act, it is very narrow or nonexistent. Overall, our current authorities are simply not adequate, for a situation of this magnitude. This is why the President’s plan, which I discuss below, includes a broad authority that would allow the Secretary to waive, for up to 1 school year, statutory or regulatory requirements that she administers or enforces, except those related to civil rights or safety, that may impede our ability to provide assistance as efficiently and expeditiously as possible to individuals or entities affected by the hurricane. We will periodically publish lists of the approved waivers to ensure transparency and consistency in how they are granted.

Before turning to the President’s legislative proposal, I would like to mention one additional element of the Department’s response to Katrina, the Hurricane Help for Schools web page. This page, which is linked to the Department’s Web site, provides a vehicle for schools, companies, organizations, and individuals to come together to help displaced students. Schools use the page to post requests for supplies and other resources students need. Companies post information on the resources they can provide, and also use it to make direct contact with needy districts. Already, some very gratifying things are happening through this effort. For instance, 100 evacuees attending Park Ridge Elementary School in Baker, Louisiana are getting brand new

backpacks filled with school supplies, courtesy of the Where to Turn organization, which is coordinating its efforts with Staten Island, NY schools and businesses. Student evacuees attending St. Mary's Catholic School in Longview, Texas are receiving new Brainchild hand-held learning devices donated by the Gatrou Group/Brainchild Academy of Coral Gables, Florida. And families in Sun Valley, Idaho have so far filled 25 backpacks with school supplies and sent them to the Okaloosa County schools in Florida and the Sacred Heart School in Los Angeles. I am very pleased with the results of this initiative, which we will certainly continue in the coming months.

#### **The Administration's Proposal**

A week ago, the President presented the Nation with a plan for compensating communities that have absorbed evacuated families, including schoolchildren, and for helping the Gulf Coast communities get back on their feet as soon as possible. For elementary and secondary education, the plan includes two major elements, along with the broad waiver authority I just described.

- We are requesting up to \$1.9 billion dollars to reimburse receiving school districts for the costs of educating displaced students this year and to assist affected districts in reopening their schools. Our plan would provide direct grants, from the Department to the district, to any district that enrolls at least 10 displaced students during school year 2005–06. In order to ensure that the funds flow to districts that are currently enrolling displaced students, and in recognition of the fact that evacuated families are likely to be very mobile, we would make these payments on a quarterly basis, based on quarterly enrollment counts. We propose to pay each district a sum equal to 90 percent of the State's average per-pupil expenditure for elementary and secondary education, up to a maximum of \$7,500 per student. This amount would be intended to cover the full instructional costs of serving evacuated students, and some three-quarters of costs of student support services and administration.

Districts receiving these funds would have broad flexibility in how they spend them. They could use the money to pay staff salaries, purchase materials and equipment, provide for building maintenance or transportation, provide special services for limited English proficient, disabled, or other students, or meet any other expenses that school officials determine are most needed. The funding would thus be much like the general assistance we provide under the current Impact Aid program. We do not believe it would be appropriate to provide more "categorical" support and make the decisions in Washington about how these funds are used at the local level.

For Louisiana and Mississippi, this new funding would provide assistance both in serving displaced students and in helping districts in the Gulf Coast region reopen. For those two States only, we would grant the money to the State educational agency, rather than directly to districts, and then State officials would distribute funds both to districts serving evacuated students (for assistance in serving those students) and to Gulf Coast districts (for reopening schools).

- The second major element of our proposal, as it relates to elementary and secondary education, is assistance to evacuated families that choose to enroll their children in private schools. As you know, many of the schoolchildren who had to leave the Gulf Coast region were private school students. Communities in Louisiana that were affected by the hurricane and flooding had an above-average number of children in private schools—some 61,000 were in private schools, compared to 187,000 students in public schools, in the four most affected parishes. In other words, about 25 percent of the students in those parishes attended private schools, compared to a national average of 11 percent.

We believe that the families of those children, as well as other families, should have the opportunity to enroll their children in private schools in their new locations. And just like we have seen with public schools across the country, many displaced students are already enrolled in private schools. These schools have graciously opened their doors in this time of need, and we ought to take that into account. Moreover, in some communities, the availability of private school slots may ease capacity concerns in the public schools, if the families, many of whose financial resources have been decimated, are provided support for paying private school tuition.

To address these issues, our proposal includes up to \$488 million for assistance to displaced families that enroll their children in private schools. We would make emergency, one-time grants to the States, which would in turn make assistance available to those families. Much like the public school assistance proposal, we would provide for each private school student a grant of up to 90 percent of the State per-pupil expenditure or \$7,500, except that the maximum amount could not exceed the student's tuition, fees, and transportation expenses. Finally, in order to

ensure that these benefits go to families with the greatest need, our proposal would require the Secretary to limit participation to families with incomes or assets below a certain level.

I know that the Congress, including members of this subcommittee, is considering other proposals for educational assistance related to Hurricane Katrina, and that some of those proposals are very similar to those put forward by the President. I believe that, on balance, the President's plan provides the best combination of flexibility and accountability needed to meet the emerging needs of students and families affected by the hurricane. At the same time, I know that Secretary Spellings looks forward to working with you—and listening to your concerns as you continue to hear from your States and constituents—to develop a comprehensive and effective package to compensate communities and help reopen schools.

Mr. Chairman, this concludes my statement. I am sure the members of the subcommittee agree with me that the situation in the Gulf Coast region is extraordinary, and that an extraordinary situation demands some extraordinary actions. I urge you to accept the President's proposals for elementary and secondary education for areas affected by the hurricane.

I would be happy to answer any questions you may have.

Senator ALEXANDER. I would like to invite our next witnesses to come. I have already introduced them, and I will ask them to testify in the order in which they come. Darryl Gates, who is a middle school special education teacher from Shreveport, LA; Sister Michaeline Green, Superintendent of Schools for the Catholic Diocese of Baton Rouge, LA; Rodney R. LaFon, who is Superintendent of the St. Charles Parish Public Schools in Luling, LA; and Mike Stein, who is President of the Margolin Hebrew Academy in Memphis, TN.

Let's see. Why don't we start with—well, we will just go right down the line here. Why don't we start with Mr. LaFon, then Mr. Gates, then Mr. Stein, and then Sister Green. And may I suggest to each of you that we have a little machine here—there is one there—which records 7 minutes. We have your testimony, and we have all read it, and it would help us understand things best if you would just tell us in your own words as much as possible in about 7 minutes what your recommendations to us are. If you need more time than that, we will give you more time than that. But if you stick to that, we could hear your testimony in about a half hour, and then that would give us time to ask you more questions.

Thank you very much for coming, Mr. LaFon.

**STATEMENTS OF RODNEY R. LaFON, SUPERINTENDENT, ST. CHARLES PARISH PUBLIC SCHOOL SYSTEM, AND MEMBER, AMERICAN ASSOCIATION OF ADMINISTRATORS GOVERNING BOARD, LULING, LA; DARYL GATES, MIDDLE SCHOOL SPECIAL EDUCATION TEACHER, YOUREE DRIVE MIDDLE SCHOOL, SHREVEPORT, LA; MICHAEL STEIN, PRESIDENT, BOARD OF DIRECTORS, MARGOLIN HEBREW ACADEMY, MEMPHIS, TN; AND SISTER M. MICHAELINE GREEN, O.P., SUPERINTENDENT OF SCHOOLS, DIOCESE OF BATON ROUGE, LA, AND CHAIRPERSON, NONPUBLIC SCHOOL COMMISSION, LOUISIANA DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION, BATON ROUGE, LA**

Mr. LaFON. Good afternoon. I am Rodney LaFon, Superintendent of Schools in St. Charles Parish in Louisiana, and I am a member of—

Senator ALEXANDER. Could you push your microphone button? Thank you.

Mr. LAFON. Sorry about that. I am a member of the American Association of School Administrators Governing Board. Again, I thank you, Chairman Alexander, and Senator Dodd and members of this subcommittee. I think what you are doing today is very, very important and has far, far-reaching, you know, information that could take us down the road.

St. Charles Parish Public Schools, we are located about 20 miles outside of New Orleans, and we were an impacted district. And I don't know—I know that you talked to Dr. Diane Russell of Jefferson Parish about a week ago, and she is hoping to get our schools up and running on October 3rd. St. Tammany Parish is also trying to do the same thing. I have for the record here a statement from Doris Voitier, who is the Superintendent of St. Bernard Parish Public Schools, where there was serious, serious devastation. And I hope that you have a chance to read that.

Senator ALEXANDER. We will be glad to read it and to include it in our record. Thank you.

Mr. LAFON. Thank you very much.

I think what I bring you today as an impacted district is the fact that, while we began opening schools last Thursday on the same day that we opened for the 10,000 children we had, we found that we had 1,300 more new students that wanted to come to St. Charles Parish, and that goes along with some of what has been said today already. And I would like to talk to that a little bit, if you don't mind.

It is our job as public school people, public school school boards, to embrace these children and make sure that they receive a quality education. And that is what St. Charles Parish is trying to do right now as we speak. When we opened, we took back our children that were with us right before the hurricane, the 10,000 students who were already enrolled, and got back to our business, which is teaching and learning. And we did a good job of that, I believe.

But as we got the influx of the 1,300, we had to decide what we were going to do and how we were going to make sure that they became a part of St. Charles Parish Public Schools, that they needed to be included in everything we did.

So as we looked at our numbers, we realized that approximately 50 percent of the students who had enrolled in our schools were from private schools from Jefferson, Orleans, and areas where the flooding took place. So we immediately worked to make sure that those students had an opportunity to get in our schools, and I want to come back and talk about what I think should be some of the waivers regarding those students in a minute.

And then we put a plan in place where we registered, in fact, today and yesterday, all of the rest of the 1,300 students who are from Jefferson, Orleans, St. Bernard, Plaquemines, and even Mississippi. And on Monday and Tuesday, those students will come to St. Charles Parish Public Schools. And we will have schedules for them. We have hired 25 additional teachers, and we know we are going to need more. And we are putting something in place to make sure that they fit right in and they are going to get the quality education that they deserve at a time of crisis.

You know, what is important to us in St. Charles Parish is that we get everything in that parish, especially the school system, back

to normalcy. That is the key—making things normal for the parish and the residents of St. Charles Parish, and those children are key to that.

I think, you know, it is important for you to know that in St. Charles Parish we have a nuclear plant, Dow Chemical, Shell Chemical, Shell Oil, Valero, Oxychem, Monsanto, and I could go on and on. And what those plants asked us to do was try to get back and up and running as quick as possible.

Now, we were impacted. We had \$5 million worth of damage to our facilities. But we said we can make this work. And when we opened last Thursday, we opened with an 80 percent workforce. So that meant we had to hire teachers to go ahead and take care of the kids we already had and hire another 25 teachers to deal with the numbers that are now coming on Monday and Tuesday. And I think that is critical.

We needed to make sure that we take care of these children, not only academically but emotionally as well. And, you know, we need to step to the plate to do that. We are going to be spending about \$7 million to embrace these children. You know, you just cannot take them and, you know, throw them in your classrooms. You have got to provide certified teachers. We had transportation problems, so we leased 18 more buses. We leased another 10 portable buildings.

Food services—some people don't think about that. Let's remember that St. Charles Parish Public Schools were totally shut down for 8 days, and we had no electricity. So all the food we had in our freezers was totally lost, \$100,000 worth of food.

Now we are opening up for 10,000 children, and now we are taking another 1,300, and we need help getting the vendors to actually come to the plate and provide the appropriate food that we are looking for because we have not been able to find those vendors.

In St. Charles Parish, electricity was out. Still, phone service is not back to normal. In fact, I can tell you right now as we speak, phone service in our school system is down because we are now experiencing problems with Bell South and what is happening with the storm. In fact, about 2 hours ago, I had to shut down St. Charles Parish Schools for tomorrow so that we can prepare for the storm and open up shelters for parents and students who could be displaced because of street flooding or tropical storm winds. Now, that might not happen, but we cannot take the chance and, you know, wait until the last minute. We have to make sure we keep in mind the safety of our children and our constituents.

So having said that we spent the last 2 days registering and making sure we are going to be ready for these students on Monday, these 1,300, here I am shutting down schools again. And I want to go back to that figure of \$7 million because that is critical. The St. Charles Parish School Board stepped to the plate and said, You know what? This is the right thing to do for kids. And we know the Federal Government and State government will come through later. But up to now, as the superintendent, I have not seen any Federal Government person or State government person say, Yes, you know what? We are going to make sure you get taken care of for what you have done for children. And I hope that that

happens, Senators. And I hear you talking about it, but it needs to happen fast.

You want school systems to step to the plate. We want to step to the plate, and we are stepping to the plate, especially when you consider we are an impacted district. We like to think of ourselves now as an assistive district, which means we are hoping to assist districts such as Jefferson, such as Orleans, and help them get back on track, because now we have put a plan in place to make sure we do it right. And thank God we have a school board that truly cares and has allowed us to do that.

If I might just change gears a minute and talk just a little bit about some of the relief we need with regard to waivers. As I said, there are a lots of Federal regulations out there, the No Child Left Behind. You know, it is going to be unfair to students in schools and districts to hold them accountable for many of those requirements during this most unusual time. Teachers are not able to meet the No Child Left Behind definition of highly qualified because many of the universities are closed because they got flooded and classes were canceled. I think that is something that the Federal Government and the Secretary need to look at very carefully.

Another thing that I think is very important is that this disruption of the education of our students and the unsettled living conditions that many of our families are experiencing make test scores unreliable this year. As a result, any conclusions formed about student achievement and annual yearly progress is going to be unreliable. And I hear you talking about 1 year. I think that is what everybody needs to be talking about with regard to waivers. I don't think St. Charles Parish Public Schools or any other school system is asking for anything unfair when we say we need some waivers to loosen up things a little bit and be a little compassionate for these children, you know, that have been displaced, for our teachers that have been displaced.

I have over 50 teachers that have been displaced. They are living with friends, relatives. But you know what? Still working with FEMA to this day, we don't have a place for those teachers to live. And yesterday I had two teachers who cried when they talked to me about it, "Dr. LaFon, when are we going to have a place to live? We want to keep our jobs in St. Charles Parish, but I have to have a place."

So we are working on 8-foot-by-30-foot travel trailers to put these teachers in who are willing to live there to do their jobs for children. That is a true educator. You know, those are people who have hearts.

What I am here talking about is just that. When you talk about this funding, it is very, very critical that all school systems, all schools receive the appropriate funding for these children. In St. Charles Parish, we spend about \$8,500. You are talking about \$7,500, talking about 90 percent. I am not in your shoes, but I can tell you, in the area where I am from in St. Charles Parish, an impacted school district, who said we are going to not only take our students back but those students who have been displaced as well, and we know those numbers are going to fluctuate, but we are willing to do that because it is the right thing to do for children and it is the right thing to do for education.

One other thing and I will stop. Finally, the McKinney-Vento act wasn't designed to address large numbers of students displaced because of catastrophic events as we are now experiencing. Some kind of legislation should be presented to amend this law to make provisions for schools and school district to have time to prepare for an infrastructure and put it in place so when these students arrive they get a quality education.

So I will leave you with this: To this date, I have not heard any firm commitment from the State or the Feds with regard to funding assistance and regulatory relief for our school district.

St. Charles Parish Public Schools and the St. Charles Parish School Board have made a commitment, and we have put a plan in place to make it happen, addressing our core business—teaching and learning.

Gentlemen, I ask for your support and assistance to make sure school districts get the dollars they need as soon as possible. I thank you.

Senator ALEXANDER. Thank you, Mr. LaFon, and thank you for making the trip here today in difficult circumstances. And thank you for sticking pretty close to 7 minutes. If you can do that, we will have more time for questions. I did not want to cut you off because you have come a long way and you have got a lot to say. But I also want Senator Sessions and Senator Dodd—we want to get down to the details.

[The prepared statement of Mr. LaFon follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF RODNEY LAFON

Good afternoon, I am Rodney LaFon, superintendent of the St. Charles Parish Public School System and a member of the American Association of Administrators Governing Board. Thank you Chairman Alexander, Senator Dodd, and members of the Subcommittee on Education and Early Childhood Development for allowing me the opportunity to speak before you today.

St. Charles Parish Public Schools, located about 20 miles from New Orleans, is in a unique situation as we have been directly impacted by Hurricane Katrina and are now positioned to offer assistance to our neighboring school districts. By State definition, St. Charles is both an impacted district and an assisting district.

St. Charles Parish was under a mandatory evacuation. The school district sustained \$5 million in damages initially classifying us as an "impacted district." We were without electricity for days. Some areas of the district are still without phone service. People continue to stand in line to shop at local grocery stores. Some streets are lined with hurricane debris. Fifty of our teachers lost their homes during the storm and are living with relatives and colleagues. Assistance with temporary housing through FEMA has been slow.

Despite these overwhelming challenges, we continue to work collaboratively with other St. Charles Parish governmental agencies to re-establish normal school and work routines.

Without the extraordinary efforts made by these agencies along with countless volunteers, St. Charles Parish Public Schools would not be in the position to now assist other impacted districts.

After losing 12 school days due to Katrina, schools re-opened last week for our 10,000 students who were enrolled prior to the hurricane. At the same time we have received 1,300 requests to enroll students. Approximately one third of these students already live in St. Charles Parish but previously attended private schools in neighboring parishes. The remaining two-thirds have been displaced from their homes and have moved to our district to live with relatives and friends. As the year progresses, we expect our student population to fluctuate as families continue to move from one area to another seeking permanent housing.

Each family comes to us with worries about how they will cope with their overwhelming losses. They wonder if their children will ever feel safe again. Our challenge is to not only meet the educational needs of these children but to also address the emotional well-being of these children during this time of crisis.

The children we are enrolling have endured many hardships within the last few weeks. Multiple families are living together, parents are without jobs, and children are worried about what tomorrow will bring. To offer some stability during these uncertain times, St. Charles Parish developed a plan to offer these children a quality education.

Staff has been working endless hours to develop a plan that will maintain the quality education provided to students prior to Katrina and to offer this same education and support to meet the needs of the students that we welcome into our school system who have been displaced by the hurricane. To do so, we had to make decisions about class sizes, classroom facilities, staffing, support services, special education services, transportation, food services, and materials and supplies without a commitment from State and Federal Government about how we will pay for these extra costs. To accommodate the additional students we have increased class sizes, converted available spaces to classrooms in existing schools, leased 18 school buses and 10 temporary classrooms and we have employed 25 additional teachers knowing we will need more. After losing almost \$100,000 in perishable food due to the power outage, our school cafeterias have had to re-stock to provide breakfast and lunch for students. Some of the enrolling students have severe disabilities requiring specialized equipment, health services, and additional personnel.

While we are willing to do our share to help our citizens and neighbors, we need immediate assurance that the residents of St. Charles Parish will not bear this financial burden alone. It is time for State and Federal officials to make commitments about funding. Educating the additional students will cost approximately \$7,000,000 for the current school year.

This includes salaries for additional teachers, bus transportation, temporary classrooms, and instructional materials and equipment. As a relatively small school district, St. Charles Parish can not afford to absorb these additional costs. Federal funds need to be made available immediately as many of the expenses that we are incurring—such as teacher salaries—must be paid monthly.

We also need relief from some Federal regulations. While we will continue to strive to achieve the goals of legislation such as NCLB, it would not be fair to students, schools, or districts to hold them accountable for many of these requirements during this most unusual year. Teachers are not able to meet the NCLB definition of “highly qualified” because many of the universities they were attending were flooded and have had to cancel classes. The disruption in the education of students and the unsettled living conditions that many families are experiencing make test scores unreliable this year. As a result, any conclusions formed about student achievement and annual yearly progress will be unreliable.

Approximately 50 percent of the students registering in St. Charles Parish previously attended private schools. The No Child Left Behind legislation and State accountability did not apply to these students when they attended private schools. Now that they are enrolled in public school settings, these students are expected to comply with accountability regulations that impact both students and districts.

Finally, the McKinney-Vento Act was not designed to address large numbers of students displaced by catastrophic events as the one we have experienced. Legislation should be presented to amend this law to make provisions for schools and school districts to have time to prepare and put an infrastructure in place that will support these students academically and emotionally.

To date there has been NO FIRM commitment from the State and Federal Government to provide funding assistance and regulatory relief for our district.

St. Charles Parish Public Schools has made a commitment to these students and has developed a plan to “make it happen” addressing the district’s core business—teaching and learning.

We need your immediate assistance and support!

Senator ALEXANDER. Mr. Gates, thank you for being here.

Mr. GATES. Good afternoon, Senator Alexander, Senator Dodd, and members of the committee. Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony today. My name is Daryl Gates, and for 28 years I have been a public school teacher. I am currently a special education teacher at Youree Drive Middle School in Shreveport, LA, as well as an adjunct instructor at Southern University in Shreveport. I am also a member of the National Education Associations IDEA Cadre. We are a 26-member group of professional educators who provide professional development about IDEA to educators and community members across the country. In all my years of teach-

ing, one thing remains true: schools and teachers are anchors of stability in children's lives. In the wake of Katrina, stability, normalcy, a sense of community, and a sense of belonging are desperately needed.

Since Hurricane Katrina hit, my district has enrolled approximately 1,400 displaced students, and we have hired 40 teachers and 18 administrators and support personnel from the New Orleans area. For the most part, these colleagues and students are living in community shelters, church shelters, and temporary housing. As of yesterday, my superintendent was preparing for evacuee students who were in Houston to be relocated to our district in light of Hurricane Rita. Our district is having trouble getting needed funds from FEMA to buy textbooks. Each textbook costs between \$50 to \$55. That means that it will cost an average of \$250 per child to prepare them properly to attend school. That is \$350,000 just for books.

Our district needs buses. Transportation costs have risen since fuel prices are high, and the buses' routes have expanded to include stops at shelters and churches. We will also need to hire additional teachers to ensure that class sizes don't begin to impede individualized instruction or hamper our efforts to address NCLB requirements. These are some of the hard costs associated with Hurricane Katrina and its aftermath. But I also want to be sure that you are aware of some of the other costs that we need to provide, such as counseling and other types of supports for children and their families.

The children from New Orleans who have enrolled in my district are dealing with many changes and many new things. Some of them are showing signs similar to acute trauma stress syndrome. They seem frightened, angry, depressed and/or a combination of the three. Several fights have occurred between the displaced students and the students who are lifelong residents. The reason? The children from New Orleans feel that much has been taken from them—their loved ones, their homes, their valued possessions, and their lives as they know them. They have nothing. They have to wear hand-me-down clothes while the children from our communities may come to school wearing designer brand clothing. The hostility is a symptom of traumatic stress syndrome. They have feelings of loss and need to find a target for their anger.

Some of the educators I have met also seem to be in denial. This, too, is an understandable human response that many may experience when trying to cope with unimaginable loss and shock. The needs are huge, but the public schools in Louisiana are responding.

Our district has instructed school counselors to meet with all of the displaced students either individually or in small groups, and we are allowing parents access to these counseling services as well. The immediate need is funding for training to prepare more persons to provide counseling. When parents of displaced children have come into our schools and indicated that their child had an individualized education plan or special education plan from the previous school, we didn't ask questions. We provided services. It is too important to us that these children continue receiving the services they need. More counselors and behavior interventionists

have been hired. Students who have behavior difficulties are being evaluated and behavior plans are being written for them.

The adjustments being made in my school and in my district are evidence that our public schools are designed to provide the widest possible array of services for children and their families quickly to allow for transition to a semblance of normalcy and stability. We are uniquely equipped to bring the skills and expertise of a variety of highly trained professionals, whether they be counselors, school psychologists, special education teachers, social workers, or others. At the end of the day, we have one goal: to meet the needs of each student in a way that allows for student success.

Last year, Louisiana adopted a statewide comprehensive curriculum. That means that the same skills are being taught across the State at the same time. Displaced public school students will have the academic continuity they need, but I want to stress to you that a student won't be able to sit at a desk and concentrate on two plus two when his mind is still attempting to cope with the disruption and loss that has occurred in his life. If we ignore that and expect business as usual from our schools and students, we will commit an unbelievable act of negligence.

For now, Shreveport is coping. At some point, the funds will run out, but the problems will remain. We need more funding for counselors and mental health professionals to continue to help our children and their families deal with issues that will remain long after buildings have reopened or been rebuilt.

Thank you today for allowing me to testify before you. I hope that Congress can act quickly and in a bipartisan manner to provide resources and to help us deliver hope to the many who need it.

Thank you.

Senator ALEXANDER. Thank you very much, Mr. Gates, and thank you for making the trip here today.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Gates follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF DARYL GATES

Good afternoon, Senator Alexander, Senator Dodd, and members of the committee. Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony today. My name is Daryl Gates and for 28 years I have been a public school teacher. I am currently a special education teacher at Youree Drive Middle School in Shreveport, Louisiana, as well as an adjunct professor at Southern University in Shreveport. I am also a member of the National Education Association's IDEA Cadre. We are a 26-member group of practicing educators who provide professional development about IDEA to educators and community members all across the country. In all my years of teaching, one thing remains true: schools and teachers are anchors of stability in children's lives. In the wake of Katrina, stability, normalcy, and a sense of community and belonging are desperately needed.

Since Hurricane Katrina hit, my district has enrolled 1,400 displaced students and we've hired many teachers from the New Orleans area. For the most part, these colleagues and students are living in shelters, church shelters, and temporary housing. At my school alone, we have many new students from New Orleans and we have no way of knowing how high that number will climb as families continue to relocate. As of yesterday, my superintendent was preparing for evacuee students who were in Houston to be relocated to our school district in preparation for Hurricane Rita. Our district is having trouble getting needed funds from FEMA to buy textbooks. Each textbook on average costs between 50 to 55 dollars. That means that it will cost an average of \$250 per child to properly prepare them for classroom work and homework. That's \$350,000 just for books that is needed. We have received many donations of clothing and gift cards to buy school uniforms. My school is one of many in our district that has a school uniform policy. Our district needs

more buses. Transportation costs have gone up since fuel prices are high and the buses routes have expanded to include stops at shelters and churches. We will also need to hire additional teachers to ensure that class sizes don't begin to impede individualized instruction. These are some of the hard costs associated with Hurricane Katrina and its aftermath, but I also want to make sure you're aware of some of the other costs that we need to acknowledge and provide for, such as counseling and other types of supports from children and their families.

The trauma to thousands and thousands of lives is very real and has only begun to manifest itself. The children from New Orleans who have enrolled in my district are dealing with so many changes, so many new things. Some of them are showing signs similar to "post-traumatic stress syndrome." They seem frightened, angry, depressed, or a combination of all three. Several fights—pushing and shoving—have broken out between the displaced students and the children who are long-time residents. Why? The children from New Orleans feel that so much has been taken from them—loved ones, their homes, their valued possessions, and their lives as they know them. They have nothing. To top it off, they have to wear hand-me-downs while the children from our community come to school in designer brands to satisfy the uniform requirement. The hostility is understandable given their feelings of loss and their equally understandable need to find a target for their anger.

The educators I've met seem to be in denial. One teacher is living in a gym in Houston. She says she is not going back to New Orleans. Instead she is moving to Baton Rouge. But she is so depressed that she is not yet able to go to look for a job. And, she now is responsible for her 90-year-old mother who was in a nursing facility in New Orleans but must now live with her. She refuses to talk about New Orleans. This, too, is an understandable human response that many go through when trying to cope with unimaginable loss and shock.

The needs are huge, and the public schools in Louisiana are responding. We are opening our doors and arms to students and their families. So far, we've been able to provide the services that our children need, but we don't know how far the resources can be stretched. Our school has instructed school counselors to meet with all of the displaced students either individually or in small groups. We even are allowing parents access to these counseling services as well. When parents of displaced children have come into our school and indicated that their child had a special education Individualized Education Plan in their previous school, we simply provided the services. We didn't stop to ask for documentation—it was too important to us that these children continue receiving the services they need. More counselors and behavior interventionists have been hired. Students who have behavior difficulties are being evaluated and behavior plans are being written for them.

The adjustments being made in my school and in my district are evidence that our public schools are designed to provide the widest possible array of services for children and their families. We are uniquely equipped to bring the skills and expertise of a variety of skilled professionals—whether they be counselors, school psychologists, special education teachers, social workers, and more. At the end of the day, we have one job: to meet the needs of each student in a way that allows them to succeed.

Some might wonder whether our displaced children will have to adjust to a different curriculum. While that will probably be the case in other States, one advantage for our students is that our State adopted a statewide comprehensive curriculum last year. So, for the first time, the same skills are being taught across the State at the same time. It is one way we can provide the continuity to these students that they need. But I want to stress to you that a student won't be able to sit at a desk and concentrate on 2+2 when his mind is still attempting to cope with the unfathomable disruption and loss that has occurred in his life. If we ignore that and expect business as usual from our schools and students, we will commit an unbelievable act of negligence.

For now, Shreveport is coping, but at some point, the funds will run out and the problems will remain. We need more funding for counselors and mental health professionals so that we can continue to help our children and their families deal with issues that will remain long after buildings have reopened or been rebuilt.

Thank you very much for allowing me to testify today. I hope that Congress can act quickly and in a bipartisan manner so that resources and hope can be delivered to so many who need it.

Senator ALEXANDER. Mr. Stein, from Memphis.

Mr. STEIN. Thank you, Mr. Chairman and distinguished members of the committee. Good afternoon. My name is Mike Stein, and I am a senior vice president of investments for Wachovia Securities

in Memphis, TN. I also serve as President of the Board of Directors of the Margolin Hebrew Academy, and it is in this role that I am honored to speak to you today.

The Margolin Hebrew Academy is an Orthodox Jewish day school with an enrollment of 250 students from pre-kindergarten through the 12th grade, providing a dual curriculum of Judaic and general studies. We strive to provide a high level of academic excellences and simultaneously meet the needs of each individual student.

As we all watched the unprecedented devastation and destruction of Hurricane Katrina on the Gulf Coast, we knew that many families would be evacuating to Memphis. I immediately met with our administrative staff to discuss how our school could best serve the needs of these families. Our school adopted a policy of “doing whatever it takes,” even though there was no way of knowing the cost and where the money would come from.

During the week of August 28th, our school enrolled 24 students ranging in age from 3 years to 17, increasing our school current population by 10 percent. Their educational, emotional, and physical needs varied, and we attempted to address all of these areas, and I believe so far we have made their transition as smooth as possible under these unparalleled circumstances.

Let me share with you some of the assistance we provided:

Free tuition—no questions asked. The children were given school uniforms, textbooks, meals, and all supplies. We hired additional staff to ensure that our new students from the Gulf Coast would not be left behind.

Dr. David Pelcovitz, a professor of psychology at Yeshiva University in New York, flew to Memphis to conduct sessions with the students and families from New Orleans, as well as our entire staff. Dr. Pelcovitz has extensive experience in post-traumatic stress treatment from his involvement with many 9/11 families.

Our staff and parent body created a network to secure housing, clothes, food, transportation, and medical needs in conjunction with the Memphis Jewish Federation and Jewish Family Service.

As we all know, the needs are great and ongoing. Our school is closely monitoring the progress of each student, both educationally and emotionally, with the goal of allowing the children to adjust to their new environment, without being labeled, allowing students to be students and not evacuees.

I have personally been inspired by the selflessness and dedication of so many individuals in our school community and across the Nation. We will fulfill our pledge, but it is our hope and expectation we will be included in any assistance the Government chooses to make.

I appreciate this concern that the committee has shown for the children and the families, and I thank you for allowing me to share some of my experiences.

Senator ALEXANDER. Thank you, Mr. Stein, and thank you for coming.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Stein follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF MICHAEL STEIN

Good afternoon, my name is Mike Stein and I am a senior vice president of investments for Wachovia Securities in Memphis, Tennessee. I also serve as president of

the board of directors of the Margolin Hebrew Academy. It is in this role that I am honored to speak to you today.

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Let me share with you some of the assistance we provided:

Free tuition—no questions asked. The children were given school uniforms, textbooks, supplies and school lunches. We hired additional staff to ensure that our new students would not be left behind due to the fact that our school year began August 17th.

Psychological support—Dr. David Pelcovitz, a professor of psychology at Yeshiva University in New York, flew to Memphis to conduct sessions with the students and families from New Orleans as well as our entire staff. Dr. Pelcovitz has extensive experience in post traumatic stress treatment, including his involvement with many 9-11 families.

Our staff and parent body created a network to secure housing, clothes, food transportation and medical needs in conjunction with the Memphis Jewish Federation and Jewish Family Service.

As we all know, the needs are great and ongoing. Our school is closely monitoring the progress of each student, both educationally and emotionally. With the goal of allowing the children to adjust to their new environment, without being labeled—allowing students to be students and not "evacuees."

I have personally been inspired by the selflessness and dedication of so many individuals in our school community as well as all across the country.

I appreciate this committee's concern for the children of the Gulf Coast. Thank you for allowing me to share some of my experiences with you.

Senator ALEXANDER. Sister Green?

Sister GREEN. Good afternoon, Senators. I am Sister Mary Michaeline Green, Superintendent of Schools for the Diocese of Baton Rouge, and I also serve as the chairperson for the Nonpublic School Commission for the Louisiana Department of Education.

Katrina has impacted our children in many ways, not just the physical dislocation. The greatest thing is the psychological aspect. The children in our schools have spent most of their lives usually in one elementary and one high school. They have built friendships and bonds with fellow students and faculty. Their world is right now upside down. They find themselves in strange, sometimes overcrowded and makeshift classrooms. Right now our schools have opened our doors and schools throughout the State as well as throughout the country. Some of our classrooms have 35, 40 students in their classrooms, and this is not a good situation. But we had to take these students in until we could make other provisions with temporary classrooms, which we hope we will get soon.

Not only have these students lost their homes, but they have lost the most important thing, which is their schools. The main concern of the parents is to return to their schools. They want to get back to their schools where they have their same friends, their same teachers, their school activities. And it is vital that we do this to relieve the pressure and the uncertainty of parents that they are experiencing now. However, many of these parents do not know

whether they will have a home to go back to, a school, or even a job to return to. Placing their children right now in a stable and loving and safe environment is very important and very imperative. Children who are happy and cared for, if they are cared for and they are happy, parents can now focus on rebuilding their lives.

As was said before, in south Louisiana we have a unique situation. About one-third of the students attend nonpublic schools. These students in our nonpublic schools very often come from low- and middle-income families, and their families are making a great sacrifice to send their children to a school of their choice for academic, religious, or safety reasons.

The nonpublic schools in Louisiana and the surrounding States have opened their doors to the displaced students. In Baton Rouge alone—we happened to be the first stop for most people as they left New Orleans. We are about 70 miles outside of New Orleans. There was not a hotel room to be gotten. People are staying in any friend or family's home that they could get into. Shelters were all around town. We have a system of 16,000 students normally. Right now we are up to 20,000. We took in 4,000 students more than we normally have. This has put a great strain on all of our faculty and our teachers and the aides in the schools, and administrators. Our office has taken in the Archdiocese of New Orleans, so the archdiocese office is operating out of our office. We are happy to do this. As soon as the storm struck, we knew that people would be—even before, people were evacuating. Labor Day came along, and I am very, very proud of the fact that our principals and their staffs and parents worked the entire Labor Day weekend, registering students, providing uniforms, providing clothes, providing shelter, anything that they could do to help. And this was very, very welcomed by the people who were evacuating.

Tuition and fees were waived and deferred in most instances. We hoped that down the road we would be able to get some assistance when we had to have the money to pay the extra teachers that we were going to have to hire and that we have already hired.

We are trying to hire as many teachers as possible from the schools in the Archdiocese of New Orleans. Parents, as I said, are supplying everything that they can to our students, even though we need other supplies.

Preparation is in progress now to open up additional classrooms. However, the situation is very fluid. People are moving back to the greater New Orleans area as the mayor and so forth were saying that it was safe to come back. Now some of those very same people are moving out of New Orleans and the surrounding areas. I just received a note a little while ago that it appears that Rita is taking a turn more toward Louisiana. I am not sure how accurate that is, but you can imagine the impact that this is going to have on everyone, especially the children.

We were assuming that students coming from the Houston shelters would possibly be coming back toward the Baton Rouge area. Now they are going north, so we are not sure where these people are going to be going.

We strongly support the President's proposal to assist all students, regardless of the type of school they attend. This crisis is about children, not politics or money. A Katrina scholarship or an

equal entitlement certificate or any other funding instrument that Congress deems appropriate will allow the displaced families to place their children in nonpublic schools similar to their former schools.

We yield our faith in you, free of bureaucracy, yet secure from fraud, to accomplish this. The families need financial assistance now because some families have paid their tuition in the schools where they were in the New Orleans and surrounding areas. Some have not paid their tuition because they do not have to pay on a yearly basis. They have no money. They have no jobs. Many have no homes, and they don't know when they are going to get back.

So the schools that are now accommodating these students need assistance, emergency assistance for the expenses that they have incurred. I met with our principals last—actually, I met with them on Monday. We had a special meeting, and I asked them to give me some idea as to what their expenses would be if we looked at hiring extra counselors, extra teachers, extra aides because of overcrowded classrooms, looking to getting additional temporary buildings. And it came up to a little over \$2 million that would be incurred just in our diocese with our 32 schools. And we have accrued this, we will be accruing these debts, and we look to you for help.

The situation is critical, and our focus is definitely on children and their immediate needs. Without financial assistance to the nonpublic schools, we may not be able to continue to accommodate the students as they come, and this would put an even greater strain on the public school system that is experiencing the same type of challenge that we are.

I know that each of you here today hears the cries of all these families and these children. People from across the country have reached out to help, from as far away as Delaware, Michigan, California, offering help of all kinds. On the local level, psychologists and doctors have set up 1 day a week to go into the schools after school to make themselves available to the parents and the children because of the trauma they have experienced. This is being offered free of charge.

Our school lunch program is doing as best we can. We stopped salad bars. We don't have the frills. We are doing basic lunches. It is not always easy to get the food we need right now, the types of food that we need, but our children are being fed a meal that they can go home and feel like they have had one good meal a day.

We thank you and have the utmost confidence that as Americans and as leaders with moral values and the resolve of the Nation we will meet the needs of these students at present and get them back to the schools where they long to be. And I acknowledge and I commend you for allowing me this opportunity, and I thank President Bush for acting so quickly, and we look forward to your prompt response to our request.

Thank you and God bless you.

[The prepared statement of Sister Green follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF SR. M. MICHAELINE GREEN, O.P.

Good afternoon, I am Sister M. Michaeline Green, O.P., the Superintendent of Schools for the Diocese of Baton Rouge, Louisiana. I am also the chairperson of the Nonpublic School Commission of the Louisiana Department of Education.

I want to thank you for your immediate response to the request by Darlene Cilento of St. Rose Academy, Mayfield, PA. I am honored and feel privileged for the opportunity to come before you today in an effort to help all the students affected by Hurricane Katrina.

Its impact on these children's lives is more than just the physical dislocation. There is also the psychological aspect. These children have spent most, if not all their lives in one school. They have built friendships and bonds with both fellow students and faculty. Their world is now upside down. They now find themselves in strange, sometimes, overcrowded and makeshift classrooms, with unknown peers, and different instructors. Not only have they lost their homes, but they have lost one of the most important aspects of their lives, their school. The main concern of the parents is to return their children to the schools that they had attended with familiar surroundings, long-time friends, educators and school activities. The rebuilding of these destroyed schools is vital in order to relieve the pressure and uncertainty that parents are experiencing. However, many do not know if and when they will have homes, schools, and jobs to return to. Placing these children in a stable, loving, and safe environment now is imperative. When children are cared for and happy, parents can focus on rebuilding their lives.

Louisiana has a unique situation in that one third of all students attend nonpublic schools compared to the national average of 11 percent. In four of the severely impacted counties (called parishes in LA) around New Orleans, approximately 61,000 students of the 187,000 total student population attend nonpublic schools from pre-K through grades 12. Most of these students come from low- to middle-income families who are making a great financial sacrifice to send their children to a school of their choice for academic, religious, and safety reasons.

Nonpublic schools across Louisiana and the surrounding States have opened their doors to the displaced students. Parents in these schools have supplied uniforms, school supplies, clothing, food, and housing. In our diocese alone, we have had a 25 percent increase in enrollment due to Katrina. Presently the situation is very fluid, both in population and in circumstances, as areas of Greater New Orleans have been opened up on a daily basis, and now we are faced with the threat of Hurricane Rita. We are responding to the here and now, and adaptability is required of both parents and schools. Schools and students are challenged with trying to put a large population into a smaller one.

A scholarship or "An Equal Entitlement Certificate" will allow the displaced families to place their children in nonpublic schools similar to their former schools while the rebuilding is taking place. The families need these certificates because some families may have paid their tuition to a school that is no longer there, or, if they haven't paid their full tuition, they may have no employment or means to pay. Also the schools that are now accommodating these students MUST be reimbursed for the expenses that they have accrued and will continue to accrue. Funding is needed to hire additional teachers and aides, provide additional classrooms and transportation, not to mention added janitorial expenses and utilities.

This situation should be addressed and funded immediately, along with the proposed "equal entitlement certificates." Without this funding, nonpublic schools may have to turn away some or all of these 61,000 displaced nonpublic students, and this would put an even greater strain on the public school system which is experiencing the many of the same challenges as the nonpublic schools.

I know that each of you here today hears the cries of the displaced families, and recognizes the need to assist ALL students no matter where they are enrolled. Furthermore, I am confident, in our compassion as Americans and as leaders with moral values and with our resolve as a Nation, we will meet the needs of these students at present and get them back into the schools that they so desperately long for.

I want to acknowledge and commend each of you on this committee, as well as, President George Bush for your prompt and tireless effort in this dire situation. May God Bless You and God Bless America. Thank you.

Senator ALEXANDER. Thank you, Sister. My impression is—and I am sure all the Senators feel this way—if we are able to do our jobs half as well as you have done yours, we will do real well in terms of responding to this. So we are deeply grateful to you for what you are doing, and we admire your compassion and your efficiency and your care for children.

Now, my questions are going to have to do with details. We want to move rapidly. We have a responsibility. We are dealing with a

lot of the taxpayers' money. The President's proposal is \$2.6 billion, and we want to spend it wisely and make sure we do not create the wrong incentives, for example, but the right incentives. And I think we want to make it simple. We do not want to contribute to the difficulty. We want to make it simple.

So let me ask you a few questions, Sister. In Baton Rouge, are there children who do not have schools to go to?

Sister GREEN. There are still children who have no schools to go to. We are opening up extra classrooms as I speak. We opened up our schools the day after Labor Day. We were out for 5 days, and we opened up the day after Labor Day, and that is when we took on a daily basis now up to 4,000 students.

In working with the Archdiocese of New Orleans, we are now ready to open up classrooms in some of our schools where we had extra wings that were going to open up for other reasons down the road.

Senator ALEXANDER. Let me follow that with this, and maybe Mr. LaFon, maybe any of you would want to respond to this. As we think about how to financially help. Please help us think in concepts. We are thinking about a year. The thinking here is that after a year, if a child is still in Knoxville or Memphis or Texas or Minneapolis, well, then, they are a Texan. Hopefully, they will have a job and be paying sales tax and be a productive citizen and they will be able to be absorbed by the school. So that is one line of thinking that is in our mind.

I think a second thing is I am hearing from Mr. LaFon and from others who have testified that they are busy trying to open the schools in these four most affected parishes in southern Louisiana. Didn't you say St. Bernard's Parish might want to be open in October?

Mr. LAFON. No. St. Tammany and Jefferson.

Senator ALEXANDER. St. Tammany and Jefferson. Let's say they are successful in opening in November or December or January. Now, isn't it true that we do not want to create an incentive for them to stay in Baton Rouge longer than—that. It might make it difficult for them to reopen the schools in Jefferson Parish. Am I correct about that?

Sister GREEN. That is correct, and it is a dilemma because right now we are hiring extra teachers. We are trying not to provide too many extra classrooms. We are trying to use as many buildings as we have present, because we know and we want these children to move back as quickly as possible.

Senator ALEXANDER. Are you hiring teachers for a year or for a semester?

Sister GREEN. We are doing it without any contract. We are trying to hire the teachers who were already employed in the Archdiocese of New Orleans.

Senator ALEXANDER. Would it make sense—let's say we have a certain amount of money to spend per student. Let's just say \$7,500 because that is what the President's proposal was. Would it make sense to spend more of that in the first semester and less of that in the second semester? In other words, if it were \$5,000 in the first semester and \$2,500 in the second semester, would that get you more money more rapidly to help the displaced children,

but at the same time not create an incentive in the second semester for students to continue to be displaced while their hometown schools are trying to open?

Mr. LAFON. Senator, if I might, when you talk about the \$8,500 in the first semester, it makes lots of sense, and I will tell you why. We know the numbers are going to fluctuate. As Jefferson Parish begins to open up again, certainly a certain amount of people will go back. Certainly a certain amount of people will still be displaced because their homes have been destroyed, and that will be the same in New Orleans, and next year probably the same in St. Bernard.

Does that mean we won't need some dollars for operational expenses in the second semester? I don't think we can say that because I don't think we have that magic ball sitting in front of us.

Senator ALEXANDER. Right.

Mr. LAFON. But it is certainly something to consider. If you think about St. Charles Parish, we are hiring 25 additional teachers full-time because we think that amount of students will certainly be there all year. But we are also hiring 10 teachers temporarily, actually through a temporary agency, so that they are not really receiving benefits and those kinds of things. And hopefully they will be able to go back to their jobs in the next coming months, at least by, say, Christmas or right after Christmas. And I think that is critical that we try to get people back in their jobs.

Senator, we had 500 applications in the last 2 weeks for teachers who needed jobs—500.

Senator ALEXANDER. You had 500 applicants or—

Mr. LAFON. Applicants. Teachers who—

Senator ALEXANDER. Who were out of work.

Mr. LAFON. Yes, sir. And so—

Senator ALEXANDER. So you don't have any problem finding teachers right now.

Mr. LAFON. No, and we do not have any problem finding quality, to be honest with you. There is no doubt about that. But, you know, truthfully, we need to get the Jefferson Parish and the St. Tammany Parish back up and running so that those people can get back to their jobs.

Senator ALEXANDER. And what assistance those parishes get is a different question in my thinking. We are talking here about 372,000 children who are displaced for up to a year. So this is somewhere away from where they were.

Mr. Gates or Mr. Stein, do you have any comment on whether it would make any sense to—assuming we have a given amount of money, for argument's sake, \$7,500, to spend more of it in the first two quarters and less of it in the second two quarters for the receiving school?

Mr. GATES. Senator, it seems logical, but I want to remind everybody that we are hearing about people who are saying, "We are not going back. There is nothing there. There is no reason to return." And I think the receiving districts need to be given help to make those accommodations.

As I said to someone earlier, it is not just the school system that is affected, but the cities are affected. They are taking in thousands of people—jobs, businesses, all affected by Hurricane Katrina. So

we need to look in a broad sense at how we are going to be helpful to everybody that is affected.

Senator ALEXANDER. Mr. Stein.

Mr. STEIN. It seems that the money should perhaps follow the student, and there is not much of an incentive for a student to stay in a place because of \$7,500. The only incentive that would be created is if the family cannot find a job, they would have to move elsewhere. So I think this is—if I understand this proposal correctly, I think that this is somehow the Government's way to help us do our job of educating the children. And it used to be reading, writing, arithmetic, and now it is relocation and rebuilding. There are many other aspects now. It is not just textbooks. It is the whole child, the whole student, the whole family.

So I think that the \$7,500—which, of course, is not going to cover the costs even though that may be the statistic, but that doesn't cover the entire cost. I think any school would rather have the money quickly or as quickly as possible, and I think a simple form 6 months into the school year, is the student still there? If it is yes, it is yes. And if it is not, then there is no more funds.

Senator ALEXANDER. Thank you. My time is up.

Senator Dodd.

Senator DODD. Well, thank you, Mr. Chairman. There are so many questions here, but first let me thank all of you for doing this. In fact, with all of the things you have got to do, coming up here and testifying—while I know it is important and we want to get your advice and counsel, it is pretty remarkable the task you have been asked to assume.

I have an awful lot of questions. First of all, Sister, you have 4,000 students who have come into the Archdiocese of Baton Rouge?

Sister GREEN. Right, and it is very fluid because Jefferson Parish was asking people to go back. And I went down there last week, last Sunday actually, and the garbage is still out uncollected. The debris is all in the roads. And it is not a very fitting place for children, but we do hope that they will go back quickly because that is our main concern.

Senator DODD. Now, when I was growing up and attended St. Thomas the Apostle School, as I recall, every student in my class was a Catholic. Most people probably assume today that all the students you are dealing with are Catholics. I suspect that is probably not the case.

Sister GREEN. We have about a 10 percent nonCatholic population.

Senator DODD. How many of these 4,000 students are nonCatholics?

Sister GREEN. Probably less than 1 percent.

Senator DODD. Less than 20?

Sister GREEN. Less than 1 percent.

Senator DODD. Less than 1 percent.

Sister GREEN. Yes.

Senator DODD. Is that a conditionality of coming into these schools in the Archdiocese of Baton Rouge?

Sister GREEN. I am sorry. I did not get that.

Senator DODD. Is it a conditionality—are you having a condition to take in students that they have been students in parochial schools?

Sister GREEN. That is our priority.

Senator DODD. It is a priority but not a condition absolute?

Sister GREEN. Right now, it—last week it was a priority. Now since students are moving out, we would be glad to help out any students.

Senator DODD. How about your school in Memphis, Mr. Stein?

Mr. STEIN. It has never really come up in the 50 years we have been in business, because we have a full half-day of intense Judaic studies. But if the need arose, we would be happy to.

Senator DODD. To you, Mr. Gates, because the special needs are so incredibly important, tell me about what you have in place in terms of special needs teachers. And we were talking about applicants. I was surprised to hear Mr. LaFon talk about 500 applications that have come in for teaching jobs. That is pretty surprising. How about special needs teachers in light of what we have all acknowledged—and Sister Green certainly talked about it very specifically, and that is, the emotional implications here with these kids. Do you have the personnel on hand to be able to provide for the emotional needs of these children?

Mr. GATES. We have hired 40 teachers from the New Orleans area, in addition to 18 administrators and support personnel. As the numbers increase of those that are coming to us, we will need more. With the mental health needs, we will need more persons trained to provide the kinds of services that this trauma has caused. So there will be increased needs for funding.

Senators, I assembled an album of pictures and articles I would also like to ask you to submit into the record.

Senator ALEXANDER. We would be happy to have that, Mr. Gates. Thank you very much. It will be a part of the record.

**[Editors Note-Due to the high cost of printing, previously published materials submitted by witnesses may be found in the files of the committee.]**

[List of newspaper articles and photographs in the album follow:]

NEWSPAPER ARTICLES AND PHOTOGRAPHS FROM THE SHREVEPORT TIMES

WHEN KATRINA CAME TO LOUISIANA

*Hospital staffers provide medical services to evacuees*, by James Ramage, photograph by Greg Pearson

*Katrina's toll goes beyond the material*, by Mary Jimenez

*Aftermath: Hurricane Katrina—Briefs—Red Cross still seeking disaster relief items—Groups asked to help provide transportation—Free online courses available for students—Labor Department seeks injured workers—From Staff Reports*

*'Three days of clothes . . . is all they have'*, by Teddy Allen

*Fundraising efforts have begun*, by Alexandyr Kent—*How you can help—Katrina Relief Fund—More shelters open—a day of prayer*, photograph by Mike Silva

*Students from south La. enroll at local schools*, by Melody Brumble and Raechal Leone, photograph by Jim Hudelson

Photograph by Greg Pearson

*Colleges, universities rush to reopen registration for displaced students*, by Melody Brumble

*Hurricane Katrina Capsules—Library branch feeding, entertaining refugees—State seeks help from medical professionals—How to donate—To donate money—Fund-raisers*, photograph by Irwin Thompson/AP

*LSU players affected by hurricane*, by Glenn Gullbeau  
*Coaches have eyes on field, family*, by Brian McCallum  
*Caddo and Bossier work to provide more shelters*, by Don Walker, photograph by Jim Hudelson  
*Evacuees seek temporary jobs*, by Loresha Wilson  
 Photograph by Michael Ainsworth/AP  
*Evacuees' long-term stay being planned*, by Keri Kerby  
*Retailers move to help victims of the hurricane*, by Michelle Mahfoufi  
*Faces of Disaster*, photographs by Jessica Leigh, Eric Gay/AP, M. Scott Mahaskey/AP, and Robert Ruiz  
*Job Fair*  
*Louisiana Tech deadlines*  
*Colleges, universities continue to enroll displaced students*, by Raechal Leone and Melody Brumble  
*Harry Connick Jr. praises hometown, to join benefit concert*, The Associated Press  
*Job fair for evacuees*  
*Planning for the future*, photograph by Robert Ruiz  
*Children of the storm*, photograph by Stan Carpenter  
*Hurricane silences legendary jazz city*, by Howard Reich, Knight Ridder Tribune News  
*Inmate evacuees arrive in area*, by Don Walker, photograph by Shane Bevel  
*SUSLA Helping Hands Team*, photographs by Mike Silva and Robert Ruiz  
 Photograph by Jessica Leigh  
*'Gatemouth' dies in Texas at 81*, by Doug Simpson, The Associated Press  
*Free studio spaces open for displaced artists*  
*Mosquito spraying to begin in N.O.*, by John Hill  
 Photograph by Greg Pearson  
*More than 45,000 hotel rooms closed by Katrina*, The Associated Press  
*Louisiana death toll shoots up*, by Adam Nossiter, The Associated Press, photograph by Shane Bevel, The Times

Senator DODD. Are you notifying parents about these opportunities?

Mr. GATES. For?

Senator DODD. For the counseling?

Mr. GATES. Yes, as they come, they are being notified.

Senator DODD. Very, very good.

In your parish, Mr. LaFon, how many schools—are there schools that are just not going to reopen?

Mr. LAFON. No. We had damage to all of our schools, but they are all reopening. We have 19 schools, 2 high schools, one on each side of the river. We are up and running pretty good as far as our schools go. We did have the damage, still do, but it is being corrected as we—

Senator DODD. You are getting an influx of 1,300 additional students.

Mr. LAFON. Yes, sir.

Senator DODD. And how about the students who might have evacuated, are they back?

Mr. LAFON. At this point we are at about 88 percent of them back, and we expect it to get to about 92, 94 percent, because we are hearing from the parents that they are certainly returning over the next few days. So we think we are going to be in pretty good shape there.

Senator DODD. Give us a brief picture, if you would, of the other parishes, the most seriously impacted parishes by the floods. Which

ones are they and how many schools are destroyed, in effect? I heard some number earlier. I heard some number like 750 schools, which seems like a very large number to me.

Mr. LAFON. I probably will not comment on that number, because that sounds high to me too, but I will tell you, St. Bernard Parish, that school system, that parish is total devastation.

Senator DODD. Gone.

Mr. LAFON. Plaquemines Parish—

Senator DODD. How many schools in that parish?

Mr. LAFON. I want to say there was about 18 schools in that parish. Do not quote me because I am not sure.

Senator DODD. OK. Go ahead. Tell me the other ones.

Mr. LAFON. Plaquemines Parish probably lost about maybe half its schools. It probably has two or three schools up toward the top part of Plaquemines Parish that will be able to be open.

Senator DODD. How many again?

Mr. LAFON. I would think they are going to open about 3 or 4 schools.

Senator DODD. Out of how many?

Mr. LAFON. I think about 10. It was a small district, Plaquemines is a small district. St. Tammany, on the other hand, is a large district of better than 20,000 students, and as I understand it, they have probably maybe 15, 20 schools with serious damage, and then some other damage as we also—

Senator DODD. Again, roughly how many schools in St. Tammany Parish?

Mr. LAFON. Senator I really want to put a number on it. I am telling you, if I have 10,000 kids and I have 20 schools approximately, then they have got to have 50 schools.

Senator DODD. OK.

Mr. LAFON. And in Jefferson Parish they have 50,000 students, so you know, you can figure that they must have close to 80 schools or more.

Senator DODD. Again, what are the numbers in Jefferson Parish?

Mr. LAFON. Quite a few schools in Jefferson Parish were damaged quite severely. I had a conversation with Dr. Diane Roussel the other day. She did not really give me a number, but she said she was going to be able to open quite a few of her schools, so I am going to tell you probably around 40 to 50 percent were seriously damaged.

Senator DODD. Are you including nonpublic schools in those numbers or just the public schools?

Mr. LAFON. Not really. I am not. I will tell you this, approximately half the students we are taking in, of that 1,300, 50 percent of them are from private schools. I am sure that they are going to try to get up and running as quick as possible, and meanwhile we are going to make sure those kids get a great education.

Senator DODD. I wonder if you might, we discussed or mentioned earlier the possibility of having the Department of Education deal with some of the construction issues as opposed to FEMA, with all due respect to FEMA. Do any of you have any reactions to that?

Mr. LAFON. FEMA moves mighty slow. I mean I have been working with—

Senator DODD. That would be the biggest understatement of the day here.

[Laughter.]

Mr. LAFON. We have been working with FEMA for about 3 weeks trying to get these travel trailers up for our teachers, and I mean, it just seems like, well, everybody keeps talking about they are cutting the red tape. All I can tell you is I see red tape, blue tape, yellow tape. I mean there is a lot of tape out there that school systems are going through. There has to be a better way for us to go and make things happen a little faster.

Senator DODD. You would prefer to maybe see the Department of Education take on that responsibility?

Mr. LAFON. I prefer somebody to make it happen, and that is what we need.

Senator DODD. Mr. Gates.

Mr. GATES. Sir, I do not have any particular thoughts about that. I am a classroom teacher and I focus on classroom instruction, but it would seem as if, just as Dr. LaFon said, if we are really serious about helping people, we are going to move expeditiously to see that needs are being met, children and their families, that they have their needs met.

Senator DODD. Sister Green, of the 4,000 students, is the Archdiocese of New Orleans being financially helpful to the Archdiocese in Baton Rouge?

Sister GREEN. I do not think so. They do not have any more money than we have at this point. They have probably far less, they have lost so much.

Senator DODD. How do you do your tuition? Do you require a certain percentage of the tuition to be paid as school starts?

Sister GREEN. Many of our schools have what we call prepaid tuition. They pay up front at the beginning of the year. It is the same thing in New Orleans, and other schools it is on a monthly basis.

Senator DODD. You have 32 schools in your Archdiocese. How many schools are there in the Archdiocese of New Orleans?

Sister GREEN. They have 105.

Senator DODD. How many of those 105 were adversely affected to such a degree they are closed or would not open?

Sister GREEN. 105,000. Excuse me?

Senator DODD. How many of those 105 schools in New Orleans, the Archdiocese of New Orleans, were either closed or so damaged that they are not likely to open again as they presently are?

Sister GREEN. I would think that probably half of them more than likely. Jefferson Parish was not, as you referred already, not that greatly affected. But the schools in New Orleans, there were some areas that were not under water. I really do not know the numbers, but it is hard to tell. The schools in St. Bernard, they are not there. St. Tammany is half and half.

Senator DODD. What are you hearing from your families of these 4,000, their likelihood of moving back should they be able to? Is there similar desire to go back to New Orleans, in that area, or are they planning on staying in Baton Rouge?

Sister GREEN. There are families who are trying to go back, but many of them do not have work. Their companies are no longer there. Many companies are moving to Baton Rouge, they already

have a branch office there, to Houston, to other places. Some say that they are just going to stay because they do not have any choice, their homes are gone.

Senator DODD. Thank you all again very much, and we will continue to work with you and listen to you in terms of your advice and how this can work and make sense. I think Mr. Gates just said it well, we have to deal with the totality of this, and keep it simple as well. I agree with the Chairman on that.

We do not want to make this terribly complicated, and we want the incentives to be right. Senator Sessions pointed that out, that that is in our interest. We want to give people the opportunity to get their lives together, and we do not want to penalize them because they made a decision to go someplace else. We do not want to penalize them if they find they cannot go back. We want to try and be understanding and as sympathetic about what a family needs to do to stay together and get back on their feet again, without trying to manage what their future ought to be, except to the extent we can help them make those decisions, what they perceive to be in their best interest and the best interest of their children.

I think that is what we ought to be looking at here, rather than trying to decide for them what their future ought to be, directing either they go back home or stay where they are, but allowing them that flexibility to get on their feet again.

I like the idea as well—and we have talked about education here and this moving around and letting the resources follow the child—for instance, so that people can start making decisions about where to live, and getting some financial help to make that decision. I think first of all that would be an asset, moving some resources into the marketplace, or if someone had a place they could fix up a little bit knowing there is someone who could rent it, that generates some jobs, people working, to get a ripple effect of these things. So we need to be flexible in that regard, so I think your point is well taken.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Senator ALEXANDER. Thank you, Senator Dodd.

We will wind up our hearing with questions from Senator Sessions.

Senator SESSIONS. Thank you.

Just to follow up, Sister Green, on Senator Dodd's comments, you are offering to take some of these displaced students, but you feel and the students feel that they should be able to share in moneys that will be aiding students, whether they go to your school or the public school.

Sister GREEN. Exactly.

Senator SESSIONS. And some of the parochial school kids in New Orleans will be going to public schools and the money would follow them there, and some might choose to come to your school. It would certainly relieve stress, would it not, on the numbers in some really crushed public schools?

Sister GREEN. Exactly.

Senator SESSIONS. Mr. LaFon, tell me about these teachers. Do they have contracts in New Orleans in some of these devastated parishes? Are they paid? Are they not being paid? What is the status?

Mr. LAFON. Senator, because of the laws, if a teacher takes a full-time job in my district and was working, say, in a St. Bernard or whatever, by law they have to resign from that position and take the job with us, if that is full time. If we are hiring people temporary and there are no retirement benefits, etc., associated with it, then it is okay.

Senator SESSIONS. So most of these 500 teachers I presume are teachers whose schools are not closed—or maybe their home was lost and they would like to move in a safer area or something?

Mr. LAFON. Both private schools and public school teachers, and the quality was really high, and so you know, we hired 25 of them, like I said, then we have 10 that are temps, and we are going to have to hire more because we do not think that they are all just going to leave us in the next 6 months. We believe that most of these people will keep these children in St. Charles Parish Public Schools for this year.

Now, does that mean we do not think the numbers will fluctuate? Of course we know that they are going to fluctuate.

Senator SESSIONS. I am curious about if you were in one of these school systems that is basically dysfunctional now, is a teacher receiving a paycheck from the system or are they not receiving a paycheck?

Mr. LAFON. Up to now they have received a paycheck, and I believe the other big key is that for those school districts that are in the situation that the St. Bernards and the Jeffersons and the Orleans are, is they are trying to make sure that those teachers can at least continue to get their health benefits, and also their retirement benefits. I think that is critical.

Senator SESSIONS. So it is not known how long they will continue to be paid?

Mr. LAFON. I do not have that answer. I assume that it will be just another month or 2, because sooner or later the State's going to have to decide to send those dollars elsewhere.

Senator SESSIONS. Each of you have taken quite a jolt in receiving this number of students. It is unlike anything you would normally expect. Sometimes enrollment is up a little and down a little, but I guess it is what, 10 percent or more for you, Mr. LaFon?

Mr. LAFON. Actually, it is closer to 15 percent increase in our numbers.

Senator SESSIONS. That is a big amount.

I am trying to figure out, Mr. Chairman—and this is poor math. People are telling me they want to help, they want to help, but do not be wasting our money, and do the right thing, and manage well and all of that. It seems to me that this figure, as I run the numbers, is a pretty generous figure, 7,500. If you have 1,300 students at \$7,000 per student, not even the 75, that would be about \$9.1 million. If you did 35 teachers at \$50,000, that would be about 1.75 million. If you bought 18 buses at 100 grand—they may be more than that, I do not know—that would be about 1.8 million, and books, a third of a million or half a million. So that totals maybe 4 or so million dollars, but you would be receiving a pretty generous amount it seems to me.

Are there other things—I know you have counseling, you have mentioned, Mr. Gates, and there would be other factors that will

come up as an expense. Look at what we are doing, this would appear to me to be a fair and generous Federal Government compensation.

Mr. LAFON. And I would hope the State would put up some money too. I do not think it should just be the Federal Government. I have, if you would like—

Senator SESSIONS. Mr. LaFon, let me ask you about these—I guess I do not want to get too far off base but I am thinking about these schools where the kids left. Now, the school normally gets paid, does it not, based on average daily attendance? At least in Alabama, they do.

Mr. LAFON. Yes, sir.

Senator SESSIONS. So they are not getting any money from the State and those kids are all gone, they are closed, and then we are giving you compensation. But those school systems that are whacked, flooded, they have got a real problem, do they not?

Mr. LAFON. They are going to have a real problem. Now, the private schools, you know, they have that tuition. I do not know what happened there. I am not sure. As far as I know, no one got their tuition back. But the bottom line with the public schools is that what is going to happen, at least as we understand it from the State, is that they are going to try to keep some things in place, at least allow those dollars that the school systems need for those teachers with regard to health benefits and retirement benefits, as I understand it will try to be in place.

Jefferson Parish is trying to get up and running again, so is St. Tammany, so that they can begin receiving those dollars again.

Now, I know that the State superintendent—and Senator Landrieu mentioned that he is a good man, and he is a good man, but his hands have been tied because lots of what he is trying to do is either controlled by the State Board of Education or by the State legislature, so he has not had a lot of answers, and I am hoping that you can provide him with some direction as to what you can do at the Federal level and what maybe you can ask our State legislators to do as well.

Senator SESSIONS. Thank you very much.

Mr. GATES. Senator Sessions, please, sir, let me add that in addition to counseling there are other services that a special education child may require. We offer adaptive physical education, occupational therapy, speech and language services. So it is not just counseling, but there are other services, other moneys that would need to be made available to comply with IDEA.

Mr. LAFON. Senator, if I might, I have a breakdown of the dollars that we figured it would take for these 1,300 students, including the things you mentioned, textbooks, instructional materials, computers, things that maybe we really have not all thought through, and this is what it takes to take care of those children and provide that quality education. So if you would like, I will submit this as part of the testimony, if you would like, sir.

Senator ALEXANDER. We would like to have that as part of the record.

[The information follows:]

St. Charles Parish Public Schools has collected data to inform the district of needed resources to provide displaced students with a high-quality education. Approx-

mately 1,300 students are expected to enroll in St. Charles Parish Public Schools by September 26, 2005. Attached is an account of expected resources needed.

	Elementary	Middle	High
Student Count .....	544	284	479
<b>Total Students</b> .....			<b>1,307</b>
Student books—core subjects only—Math, Science, Social Studies, ELA .....	\$136,000	\$55,800	\$114,960
<b>Total</b> .....			<b>\$306,760</b>

Resources needed	Cost	Total
<b>Instructional Materials</b>		
• Teacher Resource (Manuals, Resource Materials).	\$500/teacher .....	<b>\$31,000</b>
• Instructional Supplies (markers, paper, folders, staples, filing cabinets, etc.).	\$600/teacher .....	<b>\$37,200</b>
<b>Computers</b>		
• 4 per classroom with accessories and support.	\$6,300/classroom .....	<b>\$390,600</b>
<b>Projection Systems</b>		
• Projector, screens, mounts, bulbs, amplifier, VCR, etc..	\$3,600/classroom .....	<b>\$223,200</b>
<b>Furniture</b>		
• Student desks and chairs. Teacher desks & chairs.	\$85/per student desk & chair ..... \$200/per teacher desk & chair .....	\$527,585 \$12,400 <b>\$539,985</b>
<b>Portables</b>		
• 10 portables .....	\$25,500/portable x 10 .....	\$255,000
Set up—(lease).		
Operational .....	\$3,250 portable/month ..... \$26,000/portable/8 months .....	\$260,000 <b>\$515,000</b>
<b>Supplies for sp. needs (stander, changing table, lift, assistive communication devices, rifton chair).</b>	.....	<b>\$10,000</b>
<b>Personnel—salaries and benefits.</b>		
• Teachers .....	62@40,000 .....	\$2,480,000
• Gifted teachers .....	3@40,000 .....	\$120,000
• Talented Teachers .....	2@40,000 .....	\$80,000
• Para-professionals for sp.ed. ....	4@20,000 .....	\$80,000
• Nurses .....	1@40,000 .....	\$40,000
• Counselors .....	5@40,000 .....	\$200,000
• Cafeteria Workers .....	5@20,000 .....	\$100,000
• Administration .....	5@65,000 .....	\$325,000
• Custodians (contracted) .....	8 x \$200 day x 140 days .....	\$224,000
		<b>\$3,649,000</b>
<b>Transportation</b> .....	Per Day .....	Total cost per day X 18 buses \$7,049
• Bus Drivers .....	\$68.	
• Buses .....	\$83.	
• Fuel .....	\$225.	

Resources needed	Cost	Total
• Insurance .....	\$16.63 .....	
	<b>\$391.63</b> .....	<b>\$1,127,894</b>
Cafeteria .....	After Federal Reimbursement .....	<b>\$33,280</b>
Paper products and food .....	\$208/day X 160 days .....	
Uniforms .....	Per child.	
• Uniforms .....	\$30 x 2 uniforms .....	\$57,180
• Personal Apparel (undergarments, coats, etc.) .....	\$100 .....	\$95,300
• Shoes .....	\$40 .....	\$38,120
		<b>\$190,600</b>
<b>TOTAL OF ALL CATEGORIES</b> .....		<b>\$7,026,619.00</b>

Senator ALEXANDER. If I remember, you estimated that was about \$7 million?

Mr. LAFON. Seven million dollars and it is broken down for you.

Senator ALEXANDER. And 2 million, Sister, you said that was your estimate.

Thank you very much. To clarify things a little bit, school funding, generally speaking, is the Federal Government pays 7 to 9 percent for public schools, and the rest is State and local, and private schools, nonpublic schools are generally speaking on their own with the parents and in the case of the churches sometimes help.

So what we are talking about here is an extraordinary situation where we have children who are supposed to be here in Orleans Parish or Jefferson or Plaquemines, and they are spread all over the country. There is really no program that exists to pay for that. So the idea is to say that while they are in Houston or Knoxville or Minneapolis, away from home, that they will be a national responsibility. That is the Government's, that is all of us to say for the schools that have opened their doors, whether the Jewish school or the Catholic school or the private school or St. Charles Parish, that we are going to try to find a way to help you pay for and be grateful to you for what you have done.

And then that goes away after a year, and it might go away before that if these children go back to their homes. Then we go back to the traditional funding of schools, which would be in Plaquemines Parish or St. Bernard's. Fundamentally you would have State funding and local funding paying 90 to 92 percent of the cost of that. There are going to be some problems with that because the local tax base is not going to be what it was, but that sounds to me like that maybe the State is going to be called on to make a special effort there in those schools, just as the Federal Government is stepping up to make a special effort for the displaced children.

I can pledge to you that we are going to go to work tonight and work over the weekend and next week in trying to see if we can agree among the Senators on the details of a simple plan to try to help all of Katrina's displaced school children. That will require passage in the Senate and then in the House, and then a signature by the President. Even if we are moving as fast as we can, that takes a little bit of time.

That also gives us time to hear more from you if you would like. If on your way back you think, "I wish I had said that," or if you come up with other figures or other ideas, or things we are likely to overlook, Kristin Bannerman is our staff director on this project here, and she has been in touch with you. If you can e-mail her or call her, she will get it to all of the rest of us, and we would welcome your additional comments.

I think all of the Senators would want me to express again to you our admiration for what you are doing back home, and our appreciation for that, the extra hours and the extra care. You are setting a very good example for us, and we hope to follow your example. Thank you very much for making this special trip today.

[Additional material follows.]

## ADDITIONAL MATERIAL

## PREPARED STATEMENT OF SENATOR KENNEDY

Thank you, Senator Alexander, for scheduling this afternoon's hearing on how we can best help the school children affected by Hurricane Katrina.

Many of us have visited the Gulf Coast in recent days and seen the desperation. So much has been destroyed. But the spirit of the people we met remains strong, and their determination to recover and rebuild their lives inspires us all to help.

In the wake of this tragedy, our committee has a special responsibility to try to help children stay on track in school. An obvious priority in the overall relief effort is to see that they don't lose a year in their education. We can help them return to as normal an environment as possible, as quickly as possible.

Fortunately, the Nation as a whole is responding generously. Many of those in the storm's path left all they know to go to safe havens across the country, and without hesitation, people welcomed them into their homes and communities. Schools were often the first responders to these displaced families.

Today, more than 370,000 students at schools in Katrina's path have been relocated. Principals, teachers, and superintendents across the country have pledged to accommodate all the students they can:

- School districts in Houston have enrolled more than 18,000 students displaced by Hurricane Katrina.
- Georgia schools have enrolled nearly 9,000 students and Florida schools more than 6,000 students.
- Communities have streamlined procedures to accept students, and Dallas has a hotline for parents to enroll their children.

We owe each of these communities—and countless more—a debt of gratitude for pledging so much immediate help and attention. It's time for Congress to see that the schools serving them have the resources to deal with what may be the largest migration of school-children in the Nation's history.

We know that students are arriving at new schools without textbooks, school uniforms, or enrollment records. Children with disabilities have been left without their records and the individual plans they had for instruction, related services, and health care.

Schools are struggling to address the emotional needs of children arriving and struggling to cope with the loss of loved ones and homes and pets. Teachers need specialized support and training to deal with the more serious and persistent traumas from Katrina.

We know that many school districts were already slashing budgets and had too few resources before the hurricane. They need our help now more than ever. Mobile, Alabama is taking in a thousand students, even though several of its schools were themselves damaged by the hurricane. The superintendent there needs at least \$400,000 to get the school district up and moving.

I commend Senator Enzi and our other colleagues on the committee for their leadership in developing a bipartisan plan to respond to these challenges.

The bill we've introduced will ease the transition of students displaced by Katrina now in new classrooms. It will support basic instruction, help purchase books and materials, and cover costs of transportation. If a school district needs resources to accommodate students in temporary facilities, this bill would deliver that help. Schools will qualify for additional funds to expand supplemental services or after-school activities to include affected students.

It will also ensure that schools have the resources to analyze the services that students with disabilities need, and provide the full range of services in the meantime.

It's essential to respond swiftly to help schools elsewhere in the country taking in students displaced by the storm. But we can't forget the schools devastated in its wake.

Schools remain closed throughout the Gulf Region. In Mississippi alone, 271 schools have been damaged or destroyed. In North Gulfport, Mississippi, the walls of Harrison Central 9th Grade School collapsed.

Vastly more damage has occurred in Louisiana. Jefferson Parish, so devastated by the storm, will try to re-open 42 of its 84 schools on October 3rd. But eight school buildings in the district will not be able to open this year. Thirty-three other buildings need repair, even though parts of them can be opened.

Recently, the committee heard moving testimony from Superintendent Diane Roussel of the parish. She said, "Money isn't always the answer to solving the ills in our public schools, but when we're talking about equipment, supplies, rebuilding, and maintaining our teaching workforce, money is the answer."

Our committee heard her plea. Our bill creates a special fund to re-start school operations in affected areas, and provide the essential foundation needed for school districts to get back on their feet. The Secretary of Education is authorized to provide immediate aid to areas devastated by the storm.

Such assistance will help administrators and school personnel recover and recreate student data and information, re-establish their budgets, and renew teaching plans, curriculums, and equipment. Schools suffering lesser damage will be repaired and re-opened sooner.

We're reminded by this disaster that schools are the heart of local communities across America. When schools open, families return, businesses returns, and lives begin to return to normal.

I look forward to hearing testimony today from Senator Landrieu, Assistant Secretary Johnson, and others who have already done so much to respond. I also look forward to continuing our bipartisan work to deliver the help as soon as possible that Gulf Coast schools and students need to recover from this desperate situation.

QUESTIONS OF SENATOR ENZI FOR HENRY JOHNSON, RODNEY LAFON, SISTER MARY  
MICHAELINE GREEN, MICHAEL STEIN, DARYL GATES, AND PANEL 3

HENRY JOHNSON

*Question 1.* I understand that you have been on the ground in the areas directly affected by Hurricane Katrina. Based upon what you have observed, what is your assessment of the immediate needs of school districts that have been devastated and school districts receiving students that have been displaced?

*Question 2.* I understand that up to 372,000 students have been displaced by Hurricane Katrina. Recognizing that a portion of the displaced students are students with disabilities, can you share with us what guidance the Department is providing to States regarding the provision of providing special education and related services for students with disabilities who are displaced by Hurricane Katrina?

A follow-up question on the Department's efforts regarding students with disabilities, how does the Department plan to monitor the implementation of IDEA for students with disabilities displaced by Hurricane Katrina?

*Question 3.* How are school districts recruiting and obtaining additional highly qualified teachers, including special education teachers to meet the demand of increasing enrollment? Additionally, how are school district recruiting and obtaining additional related service providers, such as occupational and speech language therapist, and counselors? Can you share examples or lessons learned at this point?

*Question 4.* My understanding is in Louisiana there are 130,000 K-12 students waiting to re-enter their home district. What barriers do you believe students will experience as they return and what additional services will students need as they return to their home school district and re-build after this devastating disaster?

RODNEY LAFON

*Question.* As Superintendent of a school district that is enrolling a significant number of students displaced by Hurricane Katrina, what is your number one barrier when trying to re-open and what could this committee do to help you during this extraordinary time?

SISTER MARY MICHAELINE GREEN

*Question.* Thank you for helping us understand the plight of pre-k through grade 12 students in Louisiana. You have proposed use of "Equal Entitlement Certificates" to allow displaced families to place their children in non-public schools similar to their former schools. Please explain to us how these certificates would work?

MICHAEL STEIN

*Question.* During this most difficult time, your schools "whatever it takes" policy is meeting the needs of displaced students and their families. As the President of the Margolin Hebrew Academy Board of Directors of a school that has experienced a 10 percent increase in enrollment, what is your most pressing need?

DARYL GATES

*Question.* Thank you for sharing with us your assessment of the needs of students with disabilities. The committee is sensitive to the concern in the community that students with disabilities will not receive special education and related services in a timely fashion due to the large influx of students into particular areas. Your school has continued to provide such services. What can Congress do to help assure that students with disabilities, who may not have a copy of their Individual Education Program (IEP), receive special education and related services immediately to provide a free and appropriate public education?

PANEL 3

*Question 1.* Recognizing there is a national shortage of teachers. How has your district or school been able to recruit and obtain teachers, including teachers for children with disabilities and related service providers, to meet the educational needs of the displaced students you have enrolled?

*Question 2.* For public schools, we are continuing their base formula aid, but this is not the case with private schools. With 40 percent of the children in New Orleans attending private schools, this is an issue that will need attention and solutions. Your ideas on how to assist these schools will be very helpful as we continue to look at the mid- and long-term needs of the hardest hit communities. What steps, if any, should the Federal Government take to assist these schools? I am particularly interested in your ideas that are under this committee's jurisdiction.

*Question 3.* Knowing that this has been a very difficult time for all affected by this devastating event, how are you maintaining contact with your students, their families, and teachers to reassure them and instill confidences as they return to their school and community? What is necessary to reconnect with your students, their families, and teachers?

[Editors Note: The responses to the above questions were not available at time of print.]

RESPONSE FROM SHELBY COUNTY SCHOOLS, TENNESSEE

#### **Regarding Enrollment of Victims From Hurricane Katrina**

Shelby County Schools is a high growth school system located in suburban Shelby County, Tennessee. The school system adds over 1,000 students every year and follows a vigorous facility construction schedule that generally sees the school system building one or two additional schools each year. Almost all of our schools were at full capacity before Hurricane Katrina students arrived.

With all high growth situations, governmental entities always struggle to meet the demands placed on our operating budget. This is particularly difficult in the K-12 educational setting in Tennessee because our State funding dollars are based on previous year enrollment numbers. Therefore, a growth system like Shelby County Schools is always functioning in a budget of want and lack with more students to serve than the dollars are providing for service.

This year, Shelby County Schools enrollment grew by our usual 1,000 students, climbing to 45,947 students by the 20th day of school enrollment, 1,077 students more than our enrollment for the 2004/05 school year. And, then our enrollment grew by over 600 additional students, with the influx of victims from our Nation's tragedy, Hurricane Katrina.

Families came to all sectors of our school district from the ravaged coastal areas, living with relatives, encouraged by churches with open arms, and temporarily assigned out of harm's way to the Millington Naval Air Station from the New Orleans and Pensacola Air Stations.

While we certainly are embracing our new families and students we must be conscientious concerning our limited resources, being sure that we have the funds to provide every child in our school district a quality public school education. The additional students to our district from Hurricane Katrina have impacted every segment of our district, geographically and functionally. We maintain very accurate enrollment figures for each school and grade, monitored by the school attendance office, principal and central office staff through daily communication. Our latest figures (9/28/05) indicate that 623 students are enrolled in Shelby County Schools from the coastal areas who are identified as "displaced students."

Below is a sampling detail of how the influx of these students has impacted the Shelby County Schools district:

#### **Teaching Staff and Pupil/Teacher Ratios**

The State of Tennessee has mandated class size requirements for our students in public schools and imposes large monetary fines for each violation. Because of our growth and budget concerns, Shelby County Schools must work carefully to staff as tightly to our projected enrollments as possible and still remain within those pupil/teacher mandates. We are now exceeding those pupil/teacher ratios due to the influx of displaced students. The only means of correcting this infraction is to employ additional teaching staff.

#### **Transportation Services**

Because many of the displaced students are living in areas not previously used for residential purposes, (churches, hotels, shelters), our planning and transportation offices have had to work to alter our routing and mapping to accommodate the needs of these students. We have also added additional transportation routes, drivers and increased bus usage and fuel consumption.

#### **Student Support and Instructional Services**

By working extended hours, central office and school offices of nutrition, counseling, records, testing and special education have all been outstanding in meeting the needs and challenges presented by the sudden influx of the students displaced by Hurricane Katrina enrolling in Shelby County Schools.

##### *Nutrition*

Since each child qualified as a Homeless child, under Federal guidelines, each child is eligible for Free and Reduced Lunch services. Our school nutrition and central office nutrition staffs worked tirelessly to enroll each child in these programs and ensure that each child received the meals required at no cost to the students.

##### *Counseling*

Our counseling team has been traveling throughout the district to meet the unique needs and challenges posed by the students from the storm. Even though

we are a large school system with over 45,000 students, our counseling staff is relatively small. This has presented a challenge to the staff, but they are working to ensure that each child receives the services and attention they need and deserve.

*Testing and Placement*

Without available student records, we must individually evaluate and determine the appropriate instructional placement for each student.

*Special Education*

Without available student records, our special education teachers and supervisors must evaluate every student with special needs and develop an Individualized Educational Plan to meet Federal requirements and make certain that all disabled students and students needing special services are accommodated.

PREPARED STATEMENT OF DORIS VOITIER

INFORMATION REGARDING DAMAGES TO THE ST. BERNARD PARISH PUBLIC SCHOOLS

- 100 percent of our schools were severely impacted by the storm. We are the only school district in Louisiana that is unable to return and open at least some schools within the coming months.
- Our priority right now is retaining an outstanding and loyal teaching corps.
- Because our tax base has been erased and because State MFP funding must follow students, our coffers are bare. Many of our employees will remain with our district if we are able to extend their health insurance coverage through the remainder of this school year. We need Federal/State assistance to pay these premiums in their behalf.
- Our entire bus and vehicle fleet was damaged by the storm.
- Our students and employees are scattered across Louisiana and this Nation. Our seniors are particularly grieving for their schools. We must be able to provide some assistance to them and their parents in the form of waivers for graduation, mandatory testing, TOPS, etc.
- We have proposed to the US Department of Education and to the Louisiana Department of Education a plan costing \$34 million that will allow us to continue operations with a skeleton crew and continue to return employees to work in phases to an estimated 80 percent of staff as they rebuild our district so that we may open schools to residents as they return to St. Bernard Parish.
- Our immediate goal is to open school on a temporary site provided through the assistance of FEMA for the children of 1st responders, refinery workers, school employees, and others who are returning to the parish first.
- The return and rebuilding of the public schools is an economic development consideration. Families cannot return to St. Bernard until school is in session. We are the largest employer of the parish, and spending within businesses that are able to reopen will be severely impacted without our employees in St. Bernard to rebuild the schools and rebuild the community.

Senator ALEXANDER. The hearing is adjourned.

[Whereupon, at 5:58 p.m., the subcommittee was adjourned.]