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Chairman Harkin, Ranking Minority Member Enzi and members of the Committee, thank you very much for convening this panel to discuss issues critical to our nation's future and for providing me an opportunity to testify today. Chairman Harkin, I would like to extend a special thanks to you for your strong support and leadership of our students over the years.

My name is Daniel Cardinali and I am president of Communities In Schools. We are a national organization of 57,000 volunteers and 5,000 professional staff working together to provide integrated student services to more than 1.3 million students in 3,300 schools and support to nearly 200,000 parents or guardians. Ninety-six percent of our students are eligible for free and reduced-price lunch and more than 80 percent are students of color. Each year Communities In Schools lowers dropout rates and increases graduation rates. About 80 percent of the students we serve demonstrate academic improvement.

This is an extraordinary time to be in education. We commend the committee, the Congress and the Administration for their initiatives to support schools and your efforts to drive the meaningful reforms essential to strengthening our education system. Ensuring that highly qualified teachers teach to high standards and sharing high expectations with students will prove critical to providing students with a globally competitive education. We also believe that measuring student progress with effective assessments and improved data systems, and enabling educators to identify troubling trends before they become serious challenges will provide real-time and evidence-based interventions to keep all students academically proficient.

We firmly believe that these strategies are absolutely essential to improving public education and closing the achievement gap. However, our 33 years of experience also tells us that these reform efforts alone are insufficient. In order to achieve the full benefits of education reform, benefits essential to our students and nation, we must include integrated student services as an integral part of these efforts. To this end we support the Keeping Parents and Communities Engaged or Keeping PACE Act that would support integrated student services and ensure its inclusion alongside these other important reform strategies.

We must position students to achieve success. In public education, this means we must adopt a holistic view regarding the needs of students. Dropout risk factors can be present even before a student walks through the school door. If students are hungry, suffering from chronic (and preventable) health challenges, if students are worried about their personal safety, if students have no one to encourage them to aspire to post-secondary education and walk with them through the myriad challenges -- especially those challenges face by poor children in America on a daily basis -- then even the best teachers using a terrific curriculum and the best data systems will be not be successful unless there is a system in place to address these needs. Teachers cannot attend to these challenges nor should be expected attend to do so. Quite simply teachers are professionals, not trained to address these needs and efforts to do so only serve to distract them from the critical roles they play.

It is my belief that even the most effective school reform efforts can fall short because they fail to include a comprehensive student support strategy.

Across the country there are a number of effective organizations that provide student support services. However, my comments will focus on the work of Communities In Schools as an effective, sustainable and scalable national example of a successful integrated student support model. After 33 years, Communities In Schools knows that integrating student services will ensure children are ready for that effective teacher, so that even the most economically challenged students in America have a shot at the American Dream.

The evidence supports this conclusion. This year, Communities In Schools is completing a five-year independent evaluation of its integrated student services model. ICF International, the esteemed research organization that manages the evidence reviews for the dropout prevention section of Department of Education's What Works Clearinghouse, conducted an analysis of our integrated student service programs. The results are very compelling: according to ICF, these programs reduce the dropout rate, increase graduation rates, and increase 4th and 8th grade math and reading proficiency scores. It is important to reiterate that these results are drawn from many of the poorest schools in America.

As an organization, Communities in Schools has grown its work from serving 100 students in one school to serving more than 1.3 million students in 3,300 schools, because integrated student services programs work and remain affordable to schools and communities. Over the long term, integrated student services generate substantial savings. With an average cost of less than \$200 per student, covering a student from K-12 would cost \$2600. Compare that to the roughly \$260,000 a high school dropout is estimated to cost society in the form of lost income and taxes, higher use of social services and increased likelihood of criminal justice costs.

Our model adapts effectively to serve a wide range of communities in America. Operating in thousands of rural and urban school districts alike, CIS demonstrates that integrated student services is a transferable school reform strategy.

As the Committee considers the reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, we encourage you to include integrated student services as an essential element of these reforms. The federal government has a long history of driving effective reform at the state and local levels, often seeking to expand educational opportunities for some of our most vulnerable students. Including the Keeping PACE Act as part of the reauthorization is the next most important step in this evolution. By aligning integrated student services with school improvement, turnaround and reform strategies we will ensure that the American Dream remains within reach for our nation's poorest youth.

The Keeping PACE Act has been co-sponsored by a group of 25 legislators and endorsed by 40 leading education, health and community organizations, all of whom have a stake in the success of our nation's young people. As you work to reauthorize the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, we urge you to include comprehensive services as an element of school transformation in order to achieve the objectives of that landmark legislation and ensure every child has equal access to an excellent education.

Thank you for your time and I look forward to answering any of your questions.