



News Release  
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**Acting Secretary of Education John King Jr. Convenes Education Roundtable with El Paso Leaders as part of Opportunity Across America Tour**

*Congressman Beto O'Rourke and CREEED Board Members Richard Castro and Woody Hunt participated in roundtable, which highlighted education challenges and opportunities in the region*

El Paso, Texas—John B. King Jr., Acting Secretary of Education at the U.S. Department of Education, was joined today by education leaders across El Paso County during an education roundtable at Bowie High School. The roundtable focused on timely education issues impacting the region, including: closing the education attainment gap, especially for the region's Hispanic student population; increasing high school graduation as well as college access and college completion rates; supporting border communities; ensuring students have the skills they need to succeed in the 21<sup>st</sup> century workforce; and implementation of the new Every Student Succeeds Act.

Congressman Beto O'Rourke, who played a critical role in securing Acting Secretary King's visit to the region, moderated the roundtable which included El Paso Independent School District Superintendent Juan Cabrera, Council on Regional Economic Expansion and Educational Development (CREEED) Board Chair Richard Castro and Vice Chair Woody Hunt, and Acting Secretary King.

"El Paso's teachers, parents, and community leaders are taking what have traditionally been seen as obstacles, like the education of a large immigrant population whose first language is not English, into opportunities to capitalize on our unique position as one half of the world's largest binational community. As the country grows more interested in these

issues, I'm confident El Paso will help define the model for education going forward," said **Congressman Beto O'Rourke**.

Over the last year, CREEED has followed up on its pledge to invest \$1 million in programs and policies across the county that help close the attainment gap and accelerate college and career readiness among our students by bringing three Girls Who Code clubs to the region and expanding their teacher scholarship program to have more certified teachers that can teach dual-credit courses in district high schools.

"What we see currently is that only 1 in 6 El Paso eighth graders goes on to receive a college diploma or trade certification. That rate significantly decreases to 1 in 10 for economically disadvantaged students in our region," said **CREEED Board Chair Richard Castro**. "If we don't fix the status quo, we will not have the skilled workforce our community needs to be economically successful. That's why CREEED is investing in programs that help our students become college and career-ready and actually complete college or a certificate program in a timely manner. We're excited to share the challenges and opportunities we see in El Paso schools with Secretary John King and look forward to more discussions around education issues in the months to come."

The roundtable took place at Bowie High School, a school that not too long ago was the epicenter of scandal, but now has shown significant progress in increasing student outcomes and ensuring transparent governance within a school district.

"EPISD has changed its focus in instruction away from standardized testing and instead is now concentrating its efforts on providing a holistic education approach. That means providing active learning opportunities that allow our students to think critically and collaborate while using technology and striving for bi-literacy. EPISD's goal is to provide high quality teaching and learning to all its students and be on the forefront of classroom innovation. We believe this will make our schools and our students ready for global needs of the 21st century," stated **Superintendent Juan Cabrera**.

This roundtable comes after the signing of the new Every Student Succeeds Act, which replaced the former No Child Left Behind Act, and which Acting Secretary John King will be responsible for implementing. The new law includes provisions which could potentially expand some of the programs that CREEED already supports such as dual credit and STEM/computer coding.

El Paso was the first of six stops in Mr. King's *Opportunity Across America Tour*, which seeks to highlight the good work going on in schools across the country and hear stories and insights about what's working and where there is more work to be done.

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