

## **MALALA FUND REMARKS:**

Good morning, my name is Meighan Stone. I am honored to serve as president of the Malala Fund and to join you today.

I would like to begin by reading a statement from Malala Fund co-founder, student, education advocate and Nobel Peace Prize Laureate, Malala Yousafzai. She isn't able to be with us today as she is in her own high school, attending class-- where she believes every girl should be.

Chairman Rubio, Ranking Member Boxer and Members of the Subcommittee, thank you for inviting me to provide a statement on the issue of girls' education, a campaign to which I have dedicated my life and which impacts so many of my sisters around the world.

When the Taliban first came to my home in the Swat Valley in Pakistan, they banned all education for girls. My father Ziauddin was a teacher. He and his friends challenged the Taliban on the rights of girls. A little while later, the Taliban agreed to allow girls to go to school for three years - but no further.

Why? The Taliban knew that primary education would give girls basic skills they needed to fulfill roles they approved for women — serving their husbands and doing housework.

But they also knew that it was not enough education to allow them to think critically, take control of their futures or be leaders in their community.

Globally, more than 63 million girls are out of school and denied their right to education. Without access to a full 12 years of school, we all know that girls' opportunities are limited, and many will continue to marry and have children while they are still young.

I have seen that donor countries often have many good intentions to get more girls in school, but do not commit funding that leads to real change for girls like me. As a student in Pakistan, I often heard of world leaders pledging support to give more children access to education, but still there was no secondary school for girls in my village until Malala Fund started to build one with local partners.

I am asking the United States and other donor countries for funding for 12 years of education to ensure the poorest girls around the world receive the education they need to succeed.

I feel lucky to be able to complete my secondary education as many girls in my village are still missing out on school, and to have the opportunity to address leaders like you on their behalf.

They want you to know they are ambitious and want an education that will allow them to fulfill their potential and provide for their families, just like girls in the U.S. I hope together we can make that a reality.

Thank you,  
Malala

We meet today at a critical time of instability for not just girls, but our nation and world. Malala believes education is the answer to these challenges-- but only if we act.

For refugee girls, the situation today is grave. Girls living in conflict-affected countries are nearly 90% more likely to be out of secondary school than their peers in peaceful countries.

Every year of school these children miss costs them dearly in lost opportunities for themselves and the future of their country — and creates a vacuum in which fear and extremism can take hold.

Malala is thankful for the US government's support for education in emergencies, through recent commitments to the Education Cannot Wait Fund and the US government's leadership in \$5.1 billion USD in Syrian humanitarian relief since the start of the conflict.

Malala and I attended the Supporting Syria summit in London in February. We were grateful to hear Secretary Kerry announce more than \$290 million in new U.S. development assistance to educate refugee children living in Jordan and Lebanon. Thank you.

In addition to sharing Malala's gratitude, we come today to respectfully share three requests from Malala, on behalf of girls globally, with the Committee.

First, at this critical moment, Malala hopes you will increase your support for girls' education around the world.

As Malala mentioned and as everyone here knows, millions of girls cannot go to school for 12 years - yet somehow education aid globally is actually declining and in the U.S. has flatlined. The President's recent budget request calls for the same amount in basic education funding next year as the United States is giving this year.

In the 2017 budget, we ask the US to allocate 875 million dollars for bilateral education aid and 125 million dollars for the Global Partnership for Education, of which Malala is a dedicated champion. This is a small down payment on a peaceful, prosperous future-- funds we will pay later if not now, and dearly, to ensure stability.

Second, in Malala's own experience and the Malala Fund's work globally, we know that developing country educators and frontline organizations — not international contractors — best understand girls in their communities and are best placed to develop solutions. Today, the top 20 recipients of USAID funding are all U.S. based organizations. We urge the US government to invest more in local organizations and national governments to more effectively and sustainably address the issues keeping girls from learning.

Lastly, we also believe this committee can make a tremendous difference on transparency. We ask that you would consider directing the Congressional Budget Office to determine exactly how much the US government directly spends on actual girls' secondary education-- specifically ages 12 to 18-- and in which countries. We have found that often even US government officials cannot provide clear answers on this question.

Malala believes the US can also be a leader in demanding data and results from our developing country partners too. Girls like Malala know all too well that we need to focus as much on what happens once the funds are in country as we do when appropriated—and to not tolerate graft, or lack of data measurement, vision or ambition from Ministries of Education.

In closing, with the current events, I feel it's important to note that Malala is a proud Muslim, a faith she holds dear and inspires her work for peace and education. Our Malala Fund team is made up of mostly women, with many of them from the next generation of global leaders. We are Christian, Jewish, Sikh, B'hai, Hindu, gay, straight. We are Pakistani, Nigerian, British, Afghan, South Sudanese, Malawian, Indian and American. Despite our differences, we stand for ourselves, but not against each other. We are united in hope and commitment.

I want to leave this honorable committee with a request, the evidence of which we see in action every day—to be willing to suspend disbelief for a moment, to consider that the current media and political landscape hides an incredible opportunity. That the young women and also men of Malala's generation—those who are not often at the summit negotiation table, or yet in Parliaments, but who are desperate to learn and lead—are not just a "youth bulge", but the very key to unlocking the peace and prosperity we all seek. I don't ever see them in peace negotiations, but I find them easily online. I don't hear them quoted in newspapers, but they are so eager to talk to share if we will only listen. They are hiding in plain sight.

Some see a young Syrian as a threat. But the young Syrian women we meet in refugee camps want to go to school and become journalists and rebuild their nation. They want to serve in government. They want to change the world for good. But they need our faith and partnership—not our condemnation, or doubt. They need an education. They need our leadership and our generosity, something we all believe is still America's greatest strength.

Malala defended her own education at great personal risk. Today she is fighting to make sure all girls can go to school for 12 years because she understands that education is the key to their futures and to ours as well.

On behalf of millions of girls around the world, Malala thanks you for your leadership and asks for your support and continued commitment to education for all. Thank you.