



May 8, 2020

Dear Pennsylvania Senators and Representatives:

We thank you for your leadership in the COVID emergency response packages to date, and for the clear signal of your support for education with the inclusion of K12 funds within the CARES Act. \$13.5 billion is a step in the right direction. Our organizations represent the educators providing elementary and secondary education to the 1.7 million public school students in Pennsylvania and are committed to ensuring any federal support and response include funding critical to states and districts as they navigate never-before-seen demands on their schools, districts, staff and students.

As Congress negotiates a fifth emergency supplemental in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, it is imperative any package include significant, robust and flexible funding for our nation's public schools. We know that the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) of 2009 totaled \$100 billion in education funding, with investments in both the state fiscal stabilization fund (\$48.6 billion) and categorical programs (\$10 billion for Title I and \$11.7 billion for IDEA).

Given the likelihood that things continue to get worse before they turn around, it is realistic for Congress to acknowledge the need for an unprecedented level of investment to bolster and support state and local economies as they navigate the wake of COVID-19. Our education funding recommendations are designed to help ensure Congressional investment can be efficiently and effectively leveraged by local education agencies.

Provision of Emergency Funding Directly to States to Support Local Education Agencies: Building off the education stabilization fund included in the CARES Act last month, the fourth emergency COVID response must include an investment of at least \$175 billion for K12 education at the state level to help bolster state budgets, to stimulate the economy in the short term and to invest in education and other essential public services to ensure the long-term economic health of our nation. Mechanisms exist to support quick and efficient allocation of the dollars through states to the local level. Any such funding must include strict protections related to 'supplement, not supplant' and ensure that a high percentage (all dollars except those related to administrative costs) end up at the local level. Particularly, we urge that a certain percentage [at least 90 percent] of funds provided through any education stabilization fund be designated for direct, supplemental subgrants to school districts for K-12 educational services and be distributed to LEAs within 15 days of receipt, again with a limitation on the percentage of subgrant funds withheld for administrative purposes.

Provision of Support for Federal Categorical Programs: Recognizing the devastation facing state and local economies, it is clear that when schools open their doors, their student population will be significantly needier, with more students coming from families living at or near poverty, and students with disabilities in need of significant supports and services. We urge Congress to provide \$13 billion for IDEA and \$12 billion for Title I, funds to help school districts address the litany of needs for these students, playing catch up in the aftermath of COVID.

Emergency Connectivity Fund: Congress must include \$4 billion in funding to the E-rate program. As schools and families find themselves in the never-before-found situation of wide-spread home-based learning as schools are closed, it has highlighted a long-documented and persistent inequity as it relates to access to broadband. In the context of our students, this is called the ‘homework gap.’ Congress must help connect millions of students to the internet, so they can continue their education and planning for the possibility of interruptions to classroom teaching and learning for both the remainder of the 2019-20 school year and, likely, the 2020-2021 school year as well.

Infrastructure Funding Must Include Explicit Support for Schools: In a time of economic uncertainty and downturn, federal financial support for state and local efforts to modernize our nation’s school facility infrastructure would greatly assist local communities to build, repair and renovate our nation’s schools, also creating much needed local jobs in communities across our country.

Thank you for your continued leadership during this challenging time, and we appreciate your attention to these critical education priorities within a broader COVID response. The students and educators in Pennsylvania are counting on you.

Sincerely,

Pennsylvania Association of Career and Technical Administrators

Pennsylvania Association of Intermediate Units

Pennsylvania Association of Rural and Small Schools

Pennsylvania Association of School Administrators

Pennsylvania Association of School Business Officials

Pennsylvania Principals Association

Pennsylvania School Boards Association

Pennsylvania State Education Association