

February 23, 2021

Representative Nancy Pelosi
Speaker
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Speaker Pelosi:

As we mark one year since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic and the extraordinary changes our members and the schools and students they serve have had to navigate as a consequence, we write to express appreciation for the resources and supports made available to our schools. At the start of the pandemic, our members addressed the daunting tasks of pivoting to remote and hybrid learning, working to ensure staff and students were safe, and providing students access to school meals. The confluence of these efforts came with significant fiscal impact and during a time when many state and local governments were seeing reduced revenues due to the broader economic slowdown.

The federal supports provided to schools through the CARES Act and Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2021 (CAA) provide a strong step toward the important work of getting and keeping schools open for in-person instruction in a manner safe for students and staff. We have heard from our members across the country, and they have already been able to put CARES funding to use in the following ways:

- Ensuring students can access meals, even when schools are closed.
- Helping schools obtain and distribute technology—devices, hotspots, and more—critical to ensuring students can access remote learning.
- Supporting instruction, including employing additional staff necessary for both remote and in person learning.
- Providing professional development for staff on myriad topics including sanitation/health, new curriculum/online portals, and mental health and wellness, among others.
- Obtaining mitigation-related items, including personal protective equipment (PPE), COVID tests, cleaning/sanitation supplies, room dividers, and more.
- Paying salaries associated with increased custodial/janitorial staffing needs.

Funding from the CAA is just starting to reach school districts. Initial reporting indicates school districts will use the funds to expand and sustain the investments they made with CARES Act funding through this academic year and into the summer. Many are also planning to use this funding to partially address learning loss and academic recovery efforts.

We are aware of the inaccurate notion that schools are not in need of additional funding because of the reported 'spend' rate of federal funding to date. In conversations with our respective memberships, they report that while the 'spend rate' may seem quite low to those unfamiliar with state and district school financial procedures and requirements, they have budgeted for every dollar they are scheduled to receive from the COVID relief bills and are still anticipating more significant costs they will be unable to meet without additional federal funds. This anecdotal information is supported by research from Education Resource Strategies, which estimates that to address the requisite social-emotional and academic needs of children over the next five years, districts on average will need to increase their educational spending by 21% each year when compared to their current expenditures. In light of

anticipated declines in state spending on education, local funding can by no means increase and sustain spending more than 20% for the next five years without a major infusion of federal funding.

As the pandemic wears on, schools continue to deliver education in virtual and in-person settings. States and school districts are expending significant resources to protect students and educators as state and local revenues continue to decline precipitously. School districts remain committed to working diligently to re-open and stay open for in-person instruction where public health guidelines allow. Educators continue to strive to deliver a high-quality education to students across all grades. They are putting their health at risk to reach students who cannot learn in an online setting. Meanwhile, declines in state and local revenues that are outpacing the Great Recession a decade ago, have made educator job loss among the hardest-hit sectors during the COVID-fueled economic crisis. These facts, taken together, outline the stark reality of continued need for additional federal investment.

We strongly support the \$128 billion in funding included in the American Rescue Plan to address—among other needs—supporting remote learning, hiring more nurses, rethinking school calendars, improving ventilation in buildings and more. We applaud the emphasis on learning recovery and flexibility in how school districts determine what constitutes costs for learning recovery. We are also very pleased to see \$7 billion dedicated to emergency funding for expenses associated with remote learning through the E-Rate program to help address the Homework Gap. We are eagerly awaiting passage of this bill in the House of Representatives.

Thank you for your leadership and for consideration of our views.

Sincerely,

AASA, The School Superintendents Association
American Federation of School Administrators
American Federation of Teachers
American School Counselor Association
Association of Educational Service Agencies
Association of Latino School Administrators
Association of School Business Officials International
Council of Administrators of Special Education
Council of Great City Schools
National Association of Elementary School Principals
National Association of School Psychologists
National Association of Secondary School Principals
National Association of State Boards of Education
National Association of State Directors of Special Education
National Education Association
National PTA
National Rural Education Advocacy Consortium
National Rural Education Association
National School Boards Association

CC: U.S. House of Representatives