



April 29, 2020

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

Honorable Mitch McConnell
Majority Leader
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Honorable Kevin McCarthy
Minority Leader
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Honorable Charles E. Schumer
Minority Leader
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Speaker Pelosi, Minority Leader McCarthy, Majority Leader McConnell, and Minority Leader Schumer:

On behalf of chief state school officers and state boards of education, we write to convey deep appreciation for the assistance to education that Congress has provided through the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act. As our nation grapples with the extraordinary impact on students, educators, and communities, continued bipartisan efforts will be essential to rapidly addressing the needs of our students. State leaders have acted swiftly to respond to the great challenges posed by the pandemic and consequent school closures, but the costs have placed tremendous strain on education budgets. The immediacy of the need drives our request for additional resources to address the urgent and expanding learning and economic disparities facing school districts across the nation.

The spread of the coronavirus has created unprecedented and historic challenges for the nation's public schools. With the overwhelming majority of public schools now closed, most for the remainder of the school year, state leaders have adopted creative approaches to providing instruction through distance learning technologies, distributing school meals to students at remote locations, providing services to children with disabilities and other special needs, caring for children of health care professionals and first responders, and meeting mental health needs of students, families, and staff. The Education Stabilization Fund will provide education systems with urgently needed resources for meeting new demands and will help those systems maintain employment for educators and staff.

However, more is needed, and it is needed very soon. State and local resources are certain to diminish significantly because of reductions in tax revenues. Yet the need for schools to surmount new challenges in educating all students will only continue to grow, even as schools make plans to reopen. State and local officials implore Congress to address the needs of elementary and secondary education in any additional recovery legislation.

We strongly urge Congress to significantly increase funding for the Education Stabilization Fund, including increases for the Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief Fund to provide baseline funding for school districts to address the significant educational and health needs arising in their communities.

We also urge Congress to provide additional funding for states, communities, schools and libraries to improve access to broadband for education across the country. Millions of children currently live in homes with no Internet access, and many more lack access to the high-speed connections needed to participate successfully in distance learning. This is especially true of students living in poverty and rural communities, putting their access to continued instruction at even greater risk. The next emergency supplemental package should address the digital divide through actions that will enable schools to reach all students during times when school buildings are closed and set students up for success in digital learning when our buildings reopen.

Congress must step in to alleviate state and local education budget pressures and the significant costs for schools. State leaders and educators across the country require substantial supports to dramatically change education delivery systems to respond to the new realities presented by social distancing and stay-at-home orders. We look forward to working with Congress to provide substantial elementary and secondary education funding to help schools and communities minimize lasting harm to vulnerable students and families.

Sincerely,

Council of Chief State School Officers
National Association of State Boards of Education