



January 25, 2021

Senator Patty Murray, Chairwoman
Committee on Health, Education, Labor and Pensions
United States Senate
154 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairwoman Murray:

On behalf of the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO), I am writing to express our strong support for the quick and bipartisan confirmation of Dr. Miguel Cardona to be U.S. Secretary of Education. As a leader at the state, local, and classroom levels, Dr. Cardona has the extensive experience and skillset necessary to lead the U.S. Department of Education, bring together key stakeholders, and improve education opportunities for our nation's students, families, and communities.

CCSSO is the nonpartisan, nationwide, nonprofit organization of public officials who head departments of elementary and secondary education in the states, the District of Columbia, the Department of Defense Education Activity, the Bureau of Indian Education, and the five U.S. extra-state jurisdictions. State chiefs are indispensable to effective federal education policymaking.

As the leader of a state education agency, and as a former school principal and district leader, Dr. Cardona has led the charge in implementing and managing federal K-12 policy at the state and local levels. In particular, Dr. Cardona has placed a strong emphasis on supporting the most vulnerable students, including low-income students, students with disabilities, students of color, and English Learners, and we look forward to working with him to increase supports for all students. Dr. Cardona's work in Connecticut showcases his tireless efforts to ensure equity is at the forefront of efforts to educate students, and his personal experience as an English learner has instilled in him a focus on equity and addressing achievement gaps that will be critical in the next U.S. Secretary of Education.

In the coming months, the U.S. Department of Education will be faced with executing impactful education policies to reopen schools among other priorities. Dr. Cardona's extensive experience working in schools and, most recently as a state education commissioner navigating the pandemic, uniquely position him to lead the Department's pandemic response, including addressing learning recovery, impacts of trauma and economic hardship, impending challenges for state and local school funding, and the general disruption in the lives of students, families, and educators.

The coronavirus pandemic has had devastating consequences on students and school communities, and we recognize we still do not fully understand the long-term impacts of this virus yet. Our students and schools cannot afford to be overlooked in the effort to mitigate and recover from this crisis. Consequently, we need a Secretary of Education who is committed to partnering with federal and state agencies as well as advocating for robust programs and resources that will best serve students.

At CCSSO, we believe a core responsibility of the Department is to ensure equitable educational opportunities for all students. Existing equity gaps were exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic, and CCSSO and the members we represent are committed to working with Dr. Cardona and the U.S. Department of Education to create a more equitable education system where every student has access to the educational resources and rigor they need at the right moment in their education.

Dr. Cardona has the experience and leadership necessary to lead the Department of Education in this challenging time. State chiefs are moving forward to continue to best meet the needs of students, and we look forward to working with Dr. Cardona and the new administration as they make critical decisions, particularly in the coming weeks. Thank you for the actions you will take to ensure a swift confirmation.

Sincerely,



Carissa Moffat Miller
Chief Executive Officer
Council of Chief State School Officers

Cc: Senate HELP Committee Republican Staff

