

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

June 19, 2020

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
Majority Leader
United States Senate
317 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Charles Schumer
Democratic Leader
United States Senate
322 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Leader McConnell and Leader Schumer:

There can be no economic recovery in either the short term or the long term unless we make the investments necessary to safely reopen schools and ensure continuity of education during the ongoing pandemic. If schools are unable to reopen safely, it will be nearly impossible for many parents and caregivers to return to work. Moreover, the long-term consequences of sustained educational disruption could also hold this generation back, affecting students' quality of life and weakening our nation. We must take urgent action to ensure that schools are ready and able to educate children this fall and redouble our efforts to close opportunity gaps that are far too prevalent in the communities suffering the greatest health and economic harm from the impact of COVID-19. As such, we ask that you include at least an additional \$175 billion in dedicated funding for the Elementary and Secondary Emergency Relief Fund that was established under the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act.

This upcoming school year will be like no other. School districts will need to redesign the school day and be prepared to switch to distance learning as necessary. There will be new protocols for sanitation, transportation, and staffing. Schools will have to reengineer the use of space in and around the school building and reconfigure classrooms to ensure that social distancing can be maintained. More critically, they will also need to increase their capacity to support children's well-being – including nutrition, health screenings, and mental health supports – whether in person or at a distance. One thing is certain, school is a lifeline for children in the communities hit hardest by the pandemic and the ensuing economic fallout. School must be there for them.

We are counting on schools being able to deliver these services. Yet we know the resources are not there. State and local governments are reeling from the loss of revenue due to the economic shutdown caused by the pandemic. A recent report from the Center for Budget and Policy Priorities estimates [\\$765 billion](#) in state budget shortfalls over the next three years. School districts across the country are issuing layoff notices in anticipation of budget cuts. Even if schools were able to maintain current levels of staffing and financial resources, it would not be enough to meet the challenges of the upcoming academic year. AASA, The School Superintendents Association, estimates that the average additional COVID-related cost per student will be [\\$490, which for the average school district of 3,700 students amounts to \\$1.8 million](#). A recent analysis from the Learning Policy Institute estimates that the national financial impact of increased costs and decreased state and local education revenues could be nearly [\\$230 billion](#).

The federal government must step in with a comprehensive plan to support the reopening of schools and continuity of education for our children. Such a plan would stabilize state and local budgets, ensure equity in access to technology and broadband, enhance nutrition services, ensure sufficient testing and contact tracing to control the spread of the virus, and expand the reach of our cultural agencies such as the Institute of Museum and Library Services and the National Endowments for the Arts and Humanities to enhance school offerings and support continued learning in the community. However, the central feature of the plan must be substantial dedicated resources for our public schools to meet the additional costs and to address the additional needs of students during this time of public health, economic, and social crises. As such, we urge you to provide at least an additional \$175 billion for the Elementary and Secondary Education Relief Fund in any future coronavirus relief package.

Thank you for your consideration of this critical request.

Sincerely,

/s/ Jack Reed

Jack Reed
United States Senator

/s/ Sherrod Brown

Sherrod Brown
United States Senator

/s/ Ron Wyden

Ron Wyden
United States Senator

/s/ Richard J. Durbin

Richard J. Durbin
United States Senator

/s/ Jeffrey A. Merkley

Jeffrey A. Merkley
United States Senator

/s/ Sheldon Whitehouse

Sheldon Whitehouse
United States Senator

/s/ Cory A. Booker

Cory A. Booker
United States Senator

/s/ Michael F. Bennet

Michael F. Bennet
United States Senator

/s/ Mazie K. Hirono

Mazie K. Hirono
United States Senator

/s/ Debbie Stabenow

Debbie Stabenow
United States Senator

/s/ Tammy Baldwin

Tammy Baldwin
United States Senator

/s/ Jeanne Shaheen

Jeanne Shaheen
United States Senator

/s/ Tammy Duckworth

Tammy Duckworth
United States Senator

/s/ Chris Van Hollen

Chris Van Hollen
United States Senator

/s/ Tim Kaine

Tim Kaine
United States Senator

/s/ Elizabeth Warren

Elizabeth Warren
United States Senator

/s/ Benjamin L. Cardin

Benjamin L. Cardin
United States Senator

/s/ Margaret Wood Hassan

Margaret Wood Hassan
United States Senator

/s/ Amy Klobuchar

Amy Klobuchar
United States Senator

/s/ Robert P. Casey, Jr.

Robert P. Casey, Jr.
United States Senator

/s/ Tina Smith
Tina Smith
United States Senator

/s/ Robert Menendez
Robert Menendez
United States Senator

/s/ Edward J. Markey
Edward J. Markey
United States Senator

/s/ Kirsten Gillibrand
Kirsten Gillibrand
United States Senator

/s/ Catherine Cortez Masto
Catherine Cortez Masto
United States Senator

/s/ Tom Udall
Tom Udall
United States Senator

/s/ Gary C. Peters
Gary C. Peters
United States Senator

/s/ Kamala D. Harris
Kamala D. Harris
United States Senator

/s/ Jacky Rosen
Jacky Rosen
United States Senator

/s/ Kyrsten Sinema
Kyrsten Sinema
United States Senator

/s/ Mark R. Warner
Mark R. Warner
United States Senator

/s/ Bernard Sanders
Bernard Sanders
United States Senator

/s/ Brian Schatz
Brian Schatz
United States Senator

/s/ Dianne Feinstein
Dianne Feinstein
United States Senator

/s/ Martin Heinrich
Martin Heinrich
United States Senator

/s/ Angus S. King, Jr.
Angus S. King, Jr.
United States Senator

/s/ Jon Tester
Jon Tester
United States Senator

/s/ Thomas R. Carper
Thomas R. Carper
United States Senator

/s/ Christopher A. Coons
Christopher A. Coons
United States Senator

/s/ Richard Blumenthal
Richard Blumenthal
United States Senator

/s/ Christopher S. Murphy
Christopher S. Murphy
United States Senator