

# Congress of the United States

## Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi  
Speaker of the House  
United States House of Representatives  
H-232, U.S. Capitol  
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Steny Hoyer  
Majority Leader  
United States House of Representatives  
1705 Longworth House Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20515

May 8, 2020

Dear Speaker Pelosi and Majority Leader Hoyer:

Thank you for your leadership in developing our national response to the ongoing COVID-19 outbreak. As you work to finalize the next relief package, we urge you to increase emergency funding for elementary and secondary education. Without a direct injection of federal funds into our K-12 system, schools could be forced to lay off educators and increase class size to the detriment of academic outcomes for students.

As K-12 schools across the country transition to distance learning, they grapple with unprecedented challenges and costs. Schools are working to meet the technological needs of their students by acquiring new tools and scaling up online learning programs. They also face increased costs associated with educator training, student meal distribution, cleaning services, and the dissemination of learning materials to students and educators at home. This struggle is even more acute for institutions that experienced financial distress before the COVID-19 outbreak, including schools that have long been underfunded and schools that support large special education programs with insufficient federal dollars.

We are deeply concerned that these costs will be exacerbated by shrinking school budgets, which could lead to educator layoffs and a reduction in the quality of student services. In recent decades, many school districts have become increasingly reliant on state funding. K-12 education is particularly vulnerable to state funding shortfalls that could pit elementary and secondary education against competing funding priorities such as public health and emergency services. This has unique implications for schools in high-poverty areas which may have less revenue from local property taxes to soften the blow of economic downturn and support distance learning.

During this pandemic, it is imperative that we protect teachers and ensure that America's students receive an education that prepares them for success. As elementary and secondary schools struggle to balance education and safety amid fiscal uncertainty, they require dedicated federal funds. In the *Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act*, Congress recognized this need and established the Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief (ESSER) Fund. While we are pleased that \$13.5 billion was allocated for this program, we are concerned that this level of funding does not go far enough to provide meaningful assistance to schools that have been plunged into fiscal crisis by COVID-19.

We strongly urge you to include at least \$175 billion for the ESSER Fund in the upcoming COVID-19 relief package. Coupled with increased funding for Title I of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act and the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), this direct injection of federal funding into the K-12 system would provide schools with the lifeline they need to retain their workforce and serve their students during this pandemic.

Thank you for your consideration of this request. We look forward to working with you to ensure that our COVID-19 strategy prioritizes young Americans and the educators who work tirelessly to prepare them for a bright future.

Sincerely,



Jackie Speier  
Member of Congress

/s/  
Cindy Axne  
Member of Congress

/s/  
Sanford D. Bishop  
Member of Congress

/s/  
Brendan F. Boyle  
Member of Congress

/s/  
Joyce Beatty  
Member of Congress

/s/  
Suzanne Bonamici  
Member of Congress

/s/  
Salud Carbajal  
Member of Congress

/s/  
Tony Cárdenas  
Member of Congress

/s/  
Kathy Castor  
Member of Congress

/s/  
David N. Cicilline  
Member of Congress

/s/  
Jim Cooper  
Member of Congress

/s/  
Angie Craig  
Member of Congress

/s/  
Madeleine Dean  
Member of Congress

/s/  
Diana DeGette  
Member of Congress

/s/  
Debbie Dingell  
Member of Congress

/s/  
Brian Fitzpatrick  
Member of Congress

/s/  
Abby Finkenauer  
Member of Congress

/s/  
Bill Foster  
Member of Congress

/s/  
Marcia L. Fudge  
Member of Congress

/s/  
Jesús G. "Chuy" García  
Member of Congress

/s/  
Raúl M. Grijalva  
Member of Congress

/s/  
Deb Haaland  
Member of Congress

/s/  
Jahana Hayes  
Member of Congress

/s/  
Denny Heck  
Member of Congress

/s/  
Brian Higgins  
Member of Congress

/s/  
Henry C. "Hank" Johnson, Jr.  
Member of Congress

/s/  
Ann Kirkpatrick  
Member of Congress

/s/  
Barbara Lee  
Member of Congress

/s/  
Mike Levin  
Member of Congress

/s/  
Ted W. Lieu  
Member of Congress

/s/  
Dave Loebsack  
Member of Congress

/s/  
Jerry McNerney  
Member of Congress

/s/  
Gwen Moore  
Member of Congress

/s/  
Grace F. Napolitano  
Member of Congress

/s/  
Eleanor Holmes Norton  
Member of Congress

/s/  
Ilhan Omar  
Member of Congress

/s/  
Jimmy Panetta  
Member of Congress

/s/  
Donald M. Payne, Jr.  
Member of Congress

/s/  
Chellie Pingree  
Member of Congress

/s/  
Harley Rouda  
Member of Congress

/s/  
Tim Ryan  
Member of Congress

/s/  
John P. Sarbanes  
Member of Congress

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Mary Gay Scanlon  
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Jan Schakowsky  
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Adam Smith  
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Peter Welch  
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Jennifer Wexton  
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Susan Wild  
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John Yarmuth  
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