

June 29, 2020

Dear Members of Congress:

As you begin to develop a fourth COVID-19 relief package, National PTA would like to share with you our association's recently released position statement on the [Reopening of Public PreK-12 Schools for the 2020-2021 School Year](#). This statement clearly articulates the need to follow guidance from health professionals and agencies and to engage parents and other stakeholders in decisions on how and when to reopen schools. The statement also emphasizes that re-opening schools is vital to the continuity of education, and that schools must be prepared to address the transition back to school, the trauma of a pandemic and the many instructional issues—including the effects of learning loss and the digital divide. We need resources to address these needs, so we want to reinforce our call for a significant infusion of federal funds to support local educational agencies, disadvantaged students, family engagement, remote learning and nutrition programs.

Resources Needed to Safely and Effectively Reopen our Schools

Our position lays out the importance of following health guidelines, engaging parents and other stakeholders—and ensuring that schools have the resources they need to reopen this fall safely and effectively. National PTA is encouraged by the adoption previous COVID-19 packages and House action on the Health and Economic Recovery Omnibus Emergency Solutions (HEROES) Act. However, our schools need more to reopen this fall and safely mitigate the risks associated with this virus. Congressional recognition of the COVID-19 needs for schools has made a difference in how schools support their students and families, educators and other staff members during this pandemic. Despite these packages, there are continued needs Congress must address now. School districts and schools need specific resources now as they prepare for the new school year.

National PTA has made previous requests for additional resources to support students and their families, public schools, and the educators and staff that work in them. Today we reiterate our requests for this critical funding in response to COVID-19. Furthermore, we reinforce our opposition to the creation of any private school voucher programs and/or other mechanisms to funnel public dollars to private schools. We also urge you to include language to clarify that equitable services should be provided to students eligible under Title I only. Our recommendations for support fall in five buckets:

- 1. Emergency Funding Directly to States to Support Local Education Agencies:** Building off the education stabilization fund included in the Coronavirus Aid, Relief and Economic Security Act (CARES Act), the fourth emergency COVID response must include an investment of at least \$175 billion for K12 education. Any such funding must include strict protections related to 'supplement, not supplant' and ensure that a high percentage (all dollars except those related to administrative costs) end up at the local level.

- 2. Support for Federal Categorical Programs:** Recognizing the devastation facing state and local economies, it is clear that when schools open their doors, their student population will be significantly needier, with more students coming from families living at or near poverty, and students with disabilities in need of significant supports and services. National PTA has urged Congress to provide \$13 billion for the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act and \$12 billion for Title I to help school districts address the litany of needs for students served under these programs.
- 3. Emergency Funding for Remote Learning:** In addition to the fiscal stabilization fund, Congress must include \$4 billion in funding for remote learning through the E-rate program. As schools and families find themselves in the never-before-found situation of wide-spread home-based learning as schools were closed this spring and as they are planning for remote learning options for the fall, it has highlighted a long-documented and persistent inequity as it relates to access to broadband.
- 4. Family Engagement in Education:** In addition to supporting students, families have become and will continue to be in this fall their child's primary teachers in virtual learning situations. The current Statewide Family Engagement Centers (SFECs) program has enabled 13 states to have dedicated family engagement centers in their states. National PTA has urged Congress to provide a one-time infusion of \$245.5 million the SFECs program in the next COVID-19 relief bill to directly target and support the need of families, children and educators in this crisis.
- 5. Funding for School Nutrition programs:** While we will continue to gain insight on the specific needs of children, families and schools to provide access to nutritious meals, National PTA has urged Congress to continue to increase funds for Food and Nutrition Services at USDA for child nutrition programs to prevent, prepare for and respond to food insecurities related to COVID-19.

National PTA urges you to continue to work in a bipartisan fashion to address the significant fiscal needs of public schools as our nation works to reopen them this fall.

Sincerely,



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