



Top NEA Requests for Next COVID-19 Legislative Package

As Congress works on a new COVID-19 response package, we suggest several next steps. We placed immediate financial support measures first, along with needed regulatory relief from the Department of Education; remaining buckets are alphabetized.

Economic support for educators and households

- Immediately issue “stimulus” checks to households
- Create a State Fiscal Stabilization Fund (SFSF) 2020 similar to ARRA to distribute money to states, allocated by formula, to help avoid laying off educators in preK-12 and higher education; help pay hourly workers like education support professionals (ESPs); and help pay adjunct and contingent faculty who may lose paychecks with closures
- Cancel all federal student loan monthly payments, not just a suspension of payments and interest charges; where applicable, those canceled federal student loan payments – or those made by the federal government – should count toward achieving Public Service Loan Forgiveness completion
- Provide guaranteed, paid sick leave—no loopholes—for workers affected by COVID-19 and for those required to care for family members; this will especially assist education support professionals, many of whom don’t qualify under current leave rules
- Provide additional federal support for Medicaid to prevent states from cutting back health care services, raising taxes, or cutting other programs to meet balanced budget requirements
- Further expand unemployment insurance to cover laid-off workers who are not normally eligible, such as contingent faculty and other educators

U.S. Department of Education Regulations

- Apply congressional pressure to:
 - Maximize flexibility in Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) requirements for assessments, school improvement, grant programs, maintenance of effort provisions, and “absenteeism” for accountability purposes in CSI/TSI calculations
 - Specifically allow for the additional flexibility around the ESSA waiver provisions to allow for school districts and states make the best decisions for the health of their students, educators and communities.
 - Maximize flexibility in Individuals with Disabilities (IDEA) reporting requirements for Individualized Education Plans (IEPs)
 - Maximize flexibility in the Perkins Career and Technical Education Act requirements for accountability and reporting.
- Work with local educational agencies (LEAs) and stakeholders to ensure students with disabilities, especially those who are medically fragile or have significant cognitive disabilities, continue to receive services guaranteed by IDEA and Section 502, including online and virtual instruction

USDA National School Lunch Program

- Increase flexibility to allow for alternative meal distribution efforts and increasing funding to expand access.

- Address that given the economic impact of COVID-19, capture newly eligible families and make sure they are benefiting from the school lunch program.
- Prioritize the access to the food supply chain to students around the country.

Census 2020

- Make sure college students displaced by COVID-19 who normally live on campus are counted
- Increase virtual outreach efforts to make sure we are increasing Census survey return including distribution of hotspots in the case of closure of public libraries.

Civil rights

- Ensure Medicaid state options cover undocumented individuals
- Ensure that U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS), Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE), and Customs and Border Patrol (CBP) suspend all immigration enforcement activities in and around hospitals and other medical facilities
- Urge DHS and ICE to suspend all immigrant enforcement activities immediately
- Guaranteed safe conditions and healthcare, testing and support to those in youth detention and general public detentions and prisons.

Early Education/Child Care

- Include the Supporting Students in Response to Coronavirus Act that includes \$600 million for grants to CCDBG lead agencies to sub-grant to child care providers and a 10% reservation for the Secretary to award grants to Head Start agencies
- Adjust payment policies so they are based on enrollment of children rather than actual attendance, as allowed under Section 98.45(l) (2) of the final rule. This will allow sick children and parents to stay home without disrupting revenue for providers who already experience precarious operating budgets
- Waive any state policies that terminate child eligibility based on a specific number of absent days, within their 12-month eligibility policy
- Flexibility for Child Care and Development Block Grant (CCDBG) funding allocations to allow the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) to direct funding to areas affected by COVID-19 to mitigate the impact on child care programs in those areas
- If new supplemental funds are not readily available, allowing HHS to re-allocate already appropriated CCDBG funds that have been returned to HHS by the states, rather than sending that funding to the Treasury Department
- Specifying child care providers are eligible for any assistance offered to small businesses adversely affected by the impacts of COVID-19
- Expanding eligibility for FEMA's Public Assistance Program to include all CCDBG-eligible child care businesses, regardless of profit status

Health care

- Expand hospital capacity, i.e. beds
- Provide COVID-19 testing for all who need it, regardless of immigration status
- Increase federal support for the Affordable Care Act's Medicaid expansion to low-income adults, especially people age 50 to 64 with chronic conditions
- Increase access to protective gear for ALL front line workers, especially in hospitals

Higher education

- Give students emergency grants for food, housing, transportation, child care, health care, and technology, including reliable access to high-speed internet

- Train and prepare faculty and students to convert to online instruction

Homework gap

- Urge the Federal Communication Commission (FCC) to use its emergency powers to waive relevant E-rate program rules temporarily to help close the homework gap
- Create a one-time \$4 billion fund (or \$2 billion now, \$2 billion later) to help schools procure with Wi-Fi hotspots, equip school devices with Wi-Fi, and loan those devices to students whose schools close
- Pass legislation authorizing the FCC to allocate \$2-4 billion of the proceeds from the auction of C-band spectrum to ensuring students have internet access at home

Housing and homelessness

- As part of comprehensive response to COVID-19, provide emergency financial help to prevent housing instability and homelessness; pause action on any foreclosures due to failure to pay mortgages
- To help minimize the number of people living in homeless encampments, increase McKinney-Vento funding by \$1 billion and Disaster Housing Assistance program resources significantly
- To help prevent evictions, create a \$3 billion emergency assistance fund or increase funding for the Homeless Prevention and Rapid Rehousing program by \$3 billion
- Expand homeless shelters to alleviate crowding and reduce health risks

Labor/worker protections

- Issue OSHA standard for front-line health care workers in COVID-19 pandemic
- Consider implications of COVID-19 for maternity/paternity leave once its full implications are known

Nutrition/food assistance

- Expand food assistance by building on H.R. 6201 nutrition and school meal provisions
- Immediately halt implementation of revised Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) regulations that adversely affect school meals and SNAP households

Rural schools assistance

- Eliminate 5 percent reduction in the Secure Rural Schools (SRS) program
- Base SRS payments on 2009 levels
- Include the Forest Management for Rural Stability Act (S. 1643) and language from the Connected Rural Schools Act (S. 3151) that expands SRS allowable expenses to cover broadband and technology/connectivity

Voting and elections

- Federal government needs to give states sufficient funding and guidance to surmount barriers to the ballot posed by COVID-19; to ensure equal access to the ballot, expand and enhance absentee voting, early voting and voting by mail, especially for those who cannot go to the polls or use voting machines for health reasons
- Give special attention to the Voting Rights Act and ensure access to the polls is not impacted by racial, economic, geographic or any COVID-19 impact.