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CONTACT: Staci Maiers, NEA Communications
202-270-5333 cell, smaiers@nea.org

NEA calls Congress' latest COVID-19 package another crucial step forward *Bill aids educators, students and schools, but more will be needed*

WASHINGTON —The nation's largest union, the [National Education Association](#) representing more than 3 million educators, has been steadfast in advocating for [immediate financial support and regulatory relief](#) for educators, students and communities. Just as the [Families First Coronavirus Response Act](#) was a step in the right direction to combat the health and economic crisis caused by the COVID-19 global pandemic, the coronavirus supplemental package now before Congress takes additional crucial steps.

Providing immediate stimulus checks to families, creating a state stabilization fund to help K-12 through higher education, providing student loan relief, expanding unemployment insurance and helping households to weather the current storm were among the [measures NEA pushed for in this current bill before Congress](#).

The following is a statement that can be attributed to [NEA President Lily Eskelsen García](#):

“The global crisis caused by the coronavirus pandemic evolves by the hour, and as the days go by, we will continue to learn more about the full impact on students, educators and schools. What we know is that our message to Congress is being heard: Put people — not corporations — first and address the impending crisis head-on with critically needed help and resources.

“Our economy cannot rebound if we do not address the immediate health crisis and prioritize support for educators, students and their families. The bill is not perfect, but it does address many urgent needs of our students, educators and schools. We thank Congress for leading this bipartisan agreement but also want to be clear while it is another step forward, much more will be needed. We call on Congress to work together quickly on the next package and meet the growing needs in communities.

“As revenues decline and state and local governments' budgets suffer, Congress must help prevent dramatic cuts from hitting our schools, impacting student services and ensure educators do not lose their jobs. The inclusion in this bill of an education stabilization fund was essential, but we know and Congress must understand that tens of billions dollars more will be needed going forward to truly support all students, counter the learning loss happening through school closures and prevent educator layoffs. This bill is step one in that fight.

“Likewise, while the 6-month suspension on student loan payments will provide some much-needed relief to educators and others faced with crushing debt, more could — and should — be done.

“We applaud the inclusion of stimulus checks to households to shore up those especially in need and the very significant boost and expansion to unemployment insurance that is immediately needed. Congress was also right to provide tens of billions to help prevent greater housing insecurity during this crisis, as we advocated. We also agree that measures are needed to protect everyone's right to vote and steps must be taken to help states prepare for the election. The bill provides funding for that purpose, including increasing the ability to vote by

mail, expand early voting and online registration, but here too more funding is needed going forward to maintain secure elections.

“While the bill takes numerous important and positive steps, [we cannot comprehend why Congress refused to provide adequate direct funding for WiFi hotspots, connection devices and mobile wireless service through the existing and successful E-rate program to help our students most in need.](#) With tens of millions of students at home and educators seeking ways to deliver instruction, every student needs the technology to ensure they don’t fall behind. Our request of \$2 billion to address the “homework gap” is a drop in the bucket in a multi-trillion-dollar bill, and Congress should correct this omission in its next relief package, much like Speaker Pelosi and Leader Schumer had proposed for *this* package.

“This bipartisan bill is needed, and even though it is far from perfect, our members’ advocacy is seen. We will continue making the case for what our students and schools need because we know the path to our nation’s economic recovery and prosperity runs through our classrooms.”

More resources are available at www.nea.org/coronavirus

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The National Education Association is the nation’s largest professional employee organization, representing more than 3 million elementary and secondary teachers, higher education faculty, education support professionals, school administrators, retired educators and students preparing to become teachers. Learn more at www.nea.org.