

Don't Use COVID-19 Pandemic As Cover to Privatize Education



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Education Secretary Betsy DeVos and her allies are using COVID-19 to advance their failed effort to privatize education. In the process, they are robbing public schools and campuses of the resources they need to reopen safely and provide meaningful distance learning—the opposite of what is needed.

WHERE WE ARE TODAY

- ▶ DeVos ignored CARES Act provisions related to **equitable services** and issued guidance that is intended to divert hundreds of millions of dollars of emergency education funding from public schools to private schools. (The U.S. District Court for the District of Columbia struck down the guidance on September 4; it is not yet known if the Department of Education will appeal.)
- ▶ Other actions taken by the Department of Education and some state governors have further undermined Congress' intent when it passed the CARES Act. Specifically, funds intended for public schools—from the Governor's Emergency Education Relief (GEER) Fund and a 1 percent set-aside for the states most heavily impacted by COVID-19—have been shifted to **“microgrants” and other voucher-like grant programs.**
- ▶ Senate GOP relief proposals have included additional mechanisms to siphon funding from public schools: **vouchers** funneled through non-profits (like foundations) and \$7 billion in **direct aid** for private schools—10 percent of the total amount that would be provided for K-12 education.
- ▶ The coronavirus pandemic should NOT be used as an excuse to advance bad ideas **repeatedly rejected by Congress** that undermine accountability and rob public schools of scarce resources.

MOST ATTEND PUBLIC SCHOOLS

- ▶ The **overwhelming majority** of America's students—9 out of 10—attend public schools.
- ▶ Public schools are **open to all students** while private schools can pick and choose their students based on economic status, academic achievement, or even gender.
- ▶ Private schools can **deprive students** of religious freedom, civil rights and protections, fail to provide adequate support for those with disabilities, and are not accountable to the public.
- ▶ **Students with special needs** who use vouchers lose many rights granted by the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) and may not have the protection of an individualized education plan.
- ▶ Unlike public schools, private schools are eligible for the **Payroll Protection Program** and have already received billions of dollars in aid from it.