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December 2, 2020

United States Congress  
Washington, DC 20515-0001

Dear Senator/Representative:

For many Americans, 2020 has been the worst year of their lives.

They have endured a raging pandemic that has sickened or killed people they love. They have lost jobs or seen their incomes fall drastically due to COVID-related shutdowns and business closures. They have supervised virtual schooling while juggling working from home or caring for family members. They are at risk of homelessness with the approaching end of the eviction moratorium approaches. They wait hours for free food to put a meal on the table for their families. They strain to manage their escalating anxiety and fear so they can project calm and stability for their kids.

Hour by hour, working families' desperation grows. On behalf of the 3 million members of the NEA, who teach and support students in communities across our nation, **we urge you to pass a COVID relief bill that truly meets the significant needs that exist and finally puts America on the path to recovery.** Votes on this issue may be included in the NEA's Report Card for the 116th Congress.

We urge that in any relief package, the needs of the most vulnerable—particularly in the Black and brown and low-income communities most impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic—be prioritized. In addition, we call on Congress to provide the hundreds of billions of dollars in aid to state and local governments included in the updated Heroes Act. This would help avoid laying off public service workers in health care, public safety, and education, and others who are on the frontlines of the pandemic.

In any forthcoming legislation, we ask that you please incorporate the following:

#### **Education funding**

- Provide *at least* \$175 billion for the Education Stabilization Fund to distribute to states, allocated by formula, for public pre-K through post-secondary education to fill budget gaps caused by declining state revenues. In order to fully and safely return to in-person learning, school districts and college campuses must adapt facilities for social distancing, provide PPE for students and educators, and adjust staffing and schedule patterns.

#### **Digital Divide/Homework gap**

- At least 16 million K-12 students lack access to the internet at home. To help schools and public libraries procure and distribute Wi-Fi hotspots, connected devices, and other technology for these students, appropriate at least \$12 billion to the established, trusted, and

equitable E-Rate program, administered by the Federal Communications Commission, the same amount included in the updated Heroes Act.

#### **Worker protections, including PPE**

- Provide funding for PPE for students, teachers, faculty, education support professionals, and other staff who interact with students and their families.
- Task the Occupational Safety and Health Administration with crafting emergency standards to help protect frontline workers at risk of contracting the virus.

#### **Higher education**

- For the duration of the COVID-19 national emergency, cancel monthly federal student loan payments and interest accrual, including commercially held Federal Family Education Loans (FFEL) and Perkins Loans held by institutions of higher education.
- After the national emergency ends, cancel at least \$30,000 in student loan debt per student.
- Provide additional assistance for community colleges to compensate for CARES Act's funding methodology, which uses the number of enrolled Pell grant recipients to prioritize allocations.

#### **Child nutrition and SNAP**

- Provide a 15-percent boost in the SNAP maximum benefit and increase the SNAP monthly minimum benefit from \$16 to \$30.
- Suspend SNAP time limits and rules changes that would cut SNAP eligibility and benefits.

#### **Economic help for individuals & working families**

- Provide a second round of stimulus payments of at least \$1,200 per person, as under the CARES Act, and expand/ensure eligibility for young adults, all seniors, and immigrants—and children who are U.S. citizens but were excluded from receiving CARES funds—who were not covered by the first round, or whose payments were delayed.
- Extend the unemployment insurance provisions of the CARES Act.
- Continue to cover laid-off workers who are not normally eligible, such as adjunct and contingent faculty at colleges and universities (our review indicates they should be covered by the CARES Act).
- Extend and expand emergency paid leave for workers who are ill or providing care for others.
- Provide additional funding to help prevent homelessness, evictions, and foreclosures.

As 2020 comes to a close, families are desperate for help from the representatives they elected to speak out for them and act on their behalf, especially in times such as these. They deserve your compassion and bold action. We implore you, on their behalf: **Do not delay any longer. Pass a COVID-19 relief package that helps our nation overcome this crisis.**

Sincerely,



Marc Egan  
Director of Government Relations  
National Education Association