Recommendations for the Next Federal Stimulus Bill

May 2020

The Coronavirus Aid, Relief and Economic Security (CARES) Act that passed unanimously in the Senate on March 25th and was signed into law by President Trump on March 27, 2020 provides $30.75 billion in emergency relief funds for the U.S. Department of Education. Of that, approximately $13.5 billion would be used for K-12 emergency relief grants. These funds will be sent to State Education Agencies (SEAs) to distribute to districts through the traditional Title I funding formula. An additional $3.5 billion of discretionary funding for K-12 or higher education will be reserved for governors to use and distribute based on local need, including for emergency support grants to LEAs, especially those hit hardest by COVID-19.

We and many other education advocates believe this funding is insufficient. Although Republicans and Democrats are going back and forth on the urgency of additional stimulus legislation, below is a preliminary list of recommendations:

I. Funding

**Provide additional emergency funds of at least $140B over the next two years states to support education and counter the learning loss as a result of sustained school closures.**

1. **Increase Funding.** The federal money should target the following key areas:
   - Eliminating and minimizing layoffs
   - Instructional interventions and academic supports
   - Social and emotional-related support services
   We also recommend including mechanisms to allow the Education Department to release additional funds in the fall. In order for states to receive this funding, they must be required to commit to the goals outlined in the grant, including maintaining 1) staff (or minimizing layoffs by a specific %); 2) targeted strategies to ensure kids are on track to be on grade level; 3) instructional resources; and 4) resources to address the academic and social and emotional needs of all students.

2. **Maintain Funding Formula:** The next bill should contain the same provision as the CARES Act that directs funds to states and local school districts based on the Title I formula.

3. **Increased Transparency and Accountability on Funding** The bill should include clear accountability provisions that aim to increase transparency over the use of federal funds. For example, it could require districts and states to explain where the dollars went and trace how the money was used.

II. Planning to Restart School

**Provide targeted funding to support a strong start to the new school year and close opportunity gaps.**

1. **Resources, Time and Support.** This includes planning for re-opening, flexibility for extended day and school year, assessments and diagnostics, teacher and staff planning, and planning for future intermittent closures.

2. **High-Quality Assessments.** There should be specific allocations for state-wide diagnostic assessments that can be used in the fall to provide a benchmark for schools and educators in order to develop an instructional plan to ensure that every child is ready for the next grade-level by the end of the year, as well as supporting guidance.

3. **Title II Funds for Teacher Training and Development.** There should be opportunities for educators to plan and practice addressing learning and social and emotional needs of all students, with a primary focus on equity. There should also be set-aside funding to increase compensation for highly effective and/or high-need subject teachers in Title I schools.

4. **Paraprofessionals and Health Care Personnel.** The bill should include increased funding for additional paraprofessionals, nurses, and mental health professionals such as counselors and social workers to support differentiated trauma support. Those positions are often cut when there is a budget shortfall; however, we
recommend allocating a set amount of money that will be used to employ a set percentage of these critical positions in schools.

III. Equity
Provide targeted funding to meet the needs of the most vulnerable student and teacher populations
1. **Students with Disabilities.** Systems must provide services to the maximum possible extent during school closures.
2. **English Language Learners.** There should be specific, emergency funding of HEA Title III to ensure equitable access to high-quality learning opportunities, as well as resources and materials in students’ home language.
3. **High School Seniors.** There should be targeted financial support and assistance to students in the class of 2020 who need to remedial courses as a result of loss of learning caused by COVID-19, as well as open source resources and supports for the class of 2020 to commence college-level prep courses.
4. **Early Childhood Education.** There should be a subsidy to ensure early childcare centers and programs like Head Start are funded to continue supporting children and families.
5. **Extending Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA).** We are concerned about the catastrophic impact that ending DACA will have on thousands of young immigrants and their families, many of whom who are on the frontlines providing critical healthcare support during the pandemic. DACA should be extended.

IV. Technology
Provide targeted funding to close opportunity gaps caused by inequitable access to technology and the internet
1. **Access to Technology.** The bill should include a push for targeted funding for technology and internet access through the E-Rate program. We would also urge for some specific allocations and caps on technology expenditures in order to avoid overspending on unnecessary technology e.g., $10M spent on Chromebooks.
2. **Rural Communities.** There should be dedicated funding to serving rural communities who face unique needs as a result of COVID-19. The bill should ensure schools and districts have adequate resources, including access to technology and broadband internet connectivity.