

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

April 20, 2020

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
Speaker
U.S. House of Representatives
H-232, The Capitol Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Kevin McCarthy
Minority Leader
U.S. House of Representatives
H-204, The Capitol Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Speaker Pelosi and Minority Leader McCarthy:

Thank you for your leadership in the passage of the *Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act* to address the public health crisis caused by COVID-19. As Congress considers subsequent relief packages, we urge you to provide additional emergency funds to help students and teachers adapt to new learning environments, such as distance, virtual and online learning.

As the public health crisis continues to worsen, a growing number of states and cities across the country are issuing stay-at-home orders and closing schools. While some states have closed schools through the end of April, others have made the tough decision to close schools for the remainder of the academic year. To ensure equal learning opportunities during the pandemic, schools are increasingly adopting distance learning strategies to bring the classroom into students' homes. However, this can prove challenging for many high poverty urban and rural school districts that may lack the resources to connect disadvantaged students to digital devices or high-speed internet. For example, in the Cleveland Municipal School District, 30 to 40 percent of students do not have reliable access to the internet.¹ Even students with a computer in the home may be forced to share online time with other family members.

Congress must address this equity gap in the next relief package. The CARES Act Education Stabilization Fund helps to address daily issues local education agencies face during the pandemic. However, additional emergency relief funding through increases to existing programs, such as the Title I-A program under the Elementary and Secondary Education Act and the Federal Communication Commission's E-Rate Program, are needed to support high poverty schools and school districts to expand access to distance learning. These school districts have been left behind for far too long and providing necessary resources through the use of technology, such as online platforms and local broadcasting networks, would go further toward balancing inequities. It would also help schools maintain a rigorous academic environment and continuity of education while students stay at home during the public health emergency.

Support for distance learning training and certification of educators is also needed. Currently, many teachers are juggling virtual instruction while managing their own children's school assignments and the needs of their families. Additionally, training and other supports for effective distance instruction is not readily available for many and/or create fiscal challenges for school districts. Creating a

¹ Goldstein, Dana, et al. *As School Moves Online, Many Students Stay Logged Out*. The New York Times, 6 Apr. 2020. www.nytimes.com/2020/04/06/us/coronavirus-schools-attendance-absent.html.

pathway for teachers to be trained, supported and certified in distance teaching would help ensure continued student success outside the traditional classroom during this pandemic and beyond.

Again, thank you for your work during these difficult times. We appreciate your consideration of this request and look forward to working with you on this important issue.

Sincerely,



Marcia L. Fudge
Member of Congress

Sent on behalf of the following signatories:

Karen Bass
Member of Congress

Val B. Demings
Member of Congress

Marcy Kaptur
Member of Congress

Joyce Beatty
Member of Congress

Bill Foster
Member of Congress

John B. Larson
Member of Congress

Lisa Blunt Rochester
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Jesús G. "Chuy" García
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Brenda L. Lawrence
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Suzanne Bonamici
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