



April 21, 2020

Dear Members of the Pennsylvania Congressional Delegation:

On behalf of Pennsylvania's 1.7 million public school students, PA Schools Work urges you to support significant, flexible funding for K-12 education in the next phase of emergency COVID-19 response legislation.

PA Schools Work coalition, made up of organizations representing educators, parents, and community leaders from across Pennsylvania, is grateful for Congress's swift and bipartisan passage of COVID emergency response packages, particularly the \$13.5 billion for public schools in the CARES Act.

The economic turmoil produced by COVID-19 in Pennsylvania has been sudden and substantial. Nearly 1.5 million unemployment claims have been filed in Pennsylvania since the start of the COVID-19 shutdowns. Governor Wolf announced a projected state budget deficit of \$5 billion. This shortfall alone would lead to sweeping cuts without more federal assistance.

Making matters worse: school districts are bracing for a direct financial hit as well. They are likely to lose more than \$325 million in local revenue this fiscal year and potentially more than \$1 billion next year. This decline in local revenue is due to COVID-19-related reductions in earned income tax revenue, decreases in property tax collections, and declines in other local tax revenues.

The \$13.5 billion in school funding contained in the CARES Act, however, represents a fraction of the \$79 billion the federal government provided through the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act in response to the Great Recession. By every indication, this economic downturn will be much deeper than in 2009. Without more federal relief, the impacts on schools could far exceed the damage of the \$1 billion state funding cut of 2011, which led to cuts in school programs and the termination of 27,000 teacher and other school personnel jobs.

Thus, a \$200 billion emergency response for K-12 schools, as recently recommended by a coalition of national educational organizations, is critical to protect schools from the impact of plummeting state and local revenues and avert drastic budget cuts that will harm students and cause mass layoffs of school staff that will push unemployment even higher. Additionally, it is a fact that schools will need more resources to overcome the damaging impact of lost learning time from the school closures.

The aid to states and school districts in the CARES Act is focused on responding to the immediate demands from the coronavirus emergency. Yet the amount earmarked for K-12 public schools in Pennsylvania, about \$524 million, is far less than half the falloff in expected local school revenues, not even considering the huge state budget shortfalls. The \$200 billion nationwide investment is still needed to more fully protect our schools.

Even before the virus hit, many Pennsylvania school districts, particularly those serving the poorest students and communities of color, were unable to raise the revenues required to provide students with what they need to learn. The COVID-19 school closures revealed the inequities in the state's education system, as some districts have been able to transition to full online instruction seamlessly, while other districts lack the resources to do so. These inequities will only worsen without a strong federal response.

We urge you and your congressional colleagues across the country to act in the same bipartisan way that you have with the earlier COVID-19 measures and promptly approve a \$200 billion emergency public education funding package.

Thank you for your continued support of Pennsylvania's students.

Sincerely,
PA Schools Work

The following are members of *PA Schools Work*:

A+ Schools Pittsburgh
Latin American Community Action of Montgomery County (ACLAMO)
AFT Pennsylvania
Allies for Children
American Association of University Women (AAUW)
The Arc of Pennsylvania
Council for a Strong America
Education Law Center
Education Policy and Leadership Center (EPLC)
Education Voters of Pennsylvania
Keystone Research Center
Keystone State Education Coalition
League of Women Voters
Make the Road Pennsylvania
One PA
Pennsylvania Association of Career & Technical Administrators
Pennsylvania Association of Intermediate Units
Pennsylvania Association of Rural and Small Schools
Pennsylvania Immigration and Citizenship Coalition (PICC)
Pennsylvania Partnerships for Children
Pennsylvania Principals Association
Pennsylvania Superintendents' Association
Pennsylvania Association of School Business Officials
Pennsylvania Budget & Policy Center
Philadelphia Federation of Teachers
Phoenixville Area School District
Pennsylvania School Boards Association
Public Citizens for Children + Youth
The Public Interest Law Center
Urban League of Philadelphia