

Senator Mitch McConnell
Majority Leader
U.S. Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

Senator Charles Schumer
Minority Leader
U.S. Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

Representative Nancy Pelosi
Speaker of the House
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

Representative Kevin McCarthy
Minority Leader
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

Senator Richard Shelby
Chairman, Appropriations Committee
U.S. Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

Senator Patrick Leahy
Vice Chairman, Appropriations Committee
U.S. Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

Representative Nita Lowey
Chairwoman, Appropriations Committee
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

Representative Kay Granger
Ranking Member, Appropriations Committee
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

July 30, 2020

Dear Congressional Leadership,

On behalf of the undersigned organizations, representing the nation's educators and education leaders—those doing the critical, challenging work of keeping our nation's students learning and supported in these unprecedented circumstances—we write to share our response to the Health, Economic Assistance, Liability Protection and Schools (HEALS) Act.

We commend the Senate majority for taking action to introduce an additional emergency supplemental bill in response to the continued impact of the COVID 19 pandemic on state and local economies, and for including funding dedicated to K 12 education. However, the bill misses the mark and falls far short of the needs facing our nation's schools, which our groups have been clear to repeatedly communicate and highlight. We welcome the chance to work with the Senate to advance a bipartisan bill that can be signed into law and provide quick, efficient and effective relief for schools and communities across the country.

The proposed funding level of \$105 billion for education allocates just \$70 billion in funding dedicated to K 12 education, less than half of what many education groups have called for as the necessary baseline amount¹. We urge the Senate to significantly increase the funding level for K 12 education to ensure the long term economic health of our nation and to help schools safely start the academic year and remain running for staff and students so our economy can reopen safely and successfully.

We also call on the Senate to include \$4 billion in one time emergency funding to the Federal Communications Commission's E Rate program to quickly and efficiently help support public and private schools and public libraries in their efforts to ensure students have internet access at home this coming school year. The reality of remote learning is that between 15 and 16 million students—many from rural towns or low income families—lack the access to the technology and connectivity they need to learn from home during the COVID 19 pandemic.

In addition, the funding mechanisms under HEALS are much less flexible and more prescriptive than previous emergency COVID 19 relief packages. This will unnecessarily complicate and limit the ability of school districts to safely open schools consistent with local conditions and needs. We are strongly opposed to the conditions placed

National Education Association
National PTA
National Rural Education Advocacy Consortium
National Rural Education Association
National School Boards Association

CC: Senator Lamar Alexander
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