

July 17, 2020

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

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

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

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

Dear Leader McConnell, Speaker Pelosi, Leader Schumer, and Leader McCarthy,

Thank you for your strong and nimble leadership to stem the severe impacts of the global health crisis on the U.S. education ecosystem. The American education system still faces an uncertain and unpredictable future as students and educators approach the upcoming school year.

The pandemic has threatened the longer-term sustainability of education businesses at a time when high quality materials and innovative services are more critical than ever. Educators and students at all levels of learning need access to the important resource materials, assessments, accreditation services, and distance learning solutions that the private sector produces, but the reality is that shrinking state revenues and changing budgetary timelines have created financial uncertainty for everyone involved. Americans of all ages will require dedicated training and better skills to survive the long arm of economic disruption.

As America's students and teachers prepare for the fall, we must ensure opportunities for continuity of education for all students with the least amount of disruption whether that instruction happens in-person or online. With appreciation for all that you are doing to support the public and private sectors at this difficult time, we have outlined below our urgent requests and recommendations:

Further Invest in the Education Stabilization Fund: We request additional aid for the K12 and higher education funds. Echoing our colleagues' letter¹, we urge a bold investment of \$175 billion in K-12 and \$74 billion in Higher Education² in order to meet the ongoing and growing challenges the American education system is facing and will need to overcome as schools and institutions return to full strength following the pandemic. We also urge the inclusion of "maintenance of effort" requirements to ensure that states keep school funding levels constant, even as additional federal funding is appropriated to address concerns.

¹ <http://blogs.edweek.org/edweek/campaign-k-12/Edu%20GROUP%20funding%20letter%20040620%20FINAL.pdf>

² <https://www.acenet.edu/Documents/Letter-HELP-Committee-Reopening-Costs-070220.pdf>

Ensure Equity of Education

A large percentage of students will continue to learn online into the fall. The quick transition to remote learning this spring highlighted many equity issues – connectivity, accessibility, and more. We will need to identify the impact that the transition to crisis learning will have in the coming years. This will ensure student needs are addressed and states are able to provide equitable education to all students. Media reports and research make clear the likely profound learning loss that has occurred in the last few months and projects the impact of additional learning loss in the future.³ We urge policy makers to make clear that states will resume compliance with state assessment requirements during the 2020-21 school year, even if learning remains largely online and innovative assessment approaches are needed, Statewide assessment results can be used to both measure the effectiveness of the hybrid instructional configurations we will almost certainly be facing and allow mid-course interventions and corrections. It may be prudent, however, to allow states to seek waivers for certain accountability components of their ESSA plans which would still allow for the collection of crucial information without penalizing impacted parties for circumstances beyond their control.

Drastically Expand Connectivity and Virtual Capabilities to Support Distance Learning: We urge you to provide robust resources to ensure that all learners are able to continue their education through distance learning and e-assessment by including additional funding to expand connectivity and broadband access at schools, libraries, or at home in an effort to close the “homework gap.” This can be done in part by supporting the allocation of \$2 billion to school districts for Wi-Fi hotspots, connected devices, and mobile broadband Internet service. The existing E-Rate program is best suited to administer the funds due to its vast experience working with schools and libraries.

Bolster Student Access to Instructional Materials for Remote and In-person Learning: We urge you to provide states with \$6 billion in formula funds to meet the immediate needs of districts to procure quality, remote-learning-enabled K-12 educational curricula for the 2020-2021 school year, including remote learning upgrades to products they have already procured. These funds could also support states' and districts' development and implementation of comprehensive plans for integration of remote learning and assessment solutions, ensuring continuity between in-school and at-home learning to mitigate student learning loss during this global pandemic. Further clarity could be accomplished by directing states to use any new funding for curriculum building, academic interventions, and other learning resources – including digital and print – as well as related assessment support in the coming school year, whether schools open or operate virtually.

Create Lifelong Learning Accounts to Better Support Learners in this Evolving Economy: We urge \$50 billion in additional aid. U.S. education and workforce training structures and systems need to be revamped to reflect the rapid changes in our economy due to crisis, shocks and the changing nature of work. In order to effectively support learners and workers to prepare, train, or retrain for in-demand professions, we support the pairing of educational funds with tuition reimbursement or other eligible aid so learners can pursue employer-sponsored, college-backed programs or to allow employees to participate in apprenticeship and job training programs in the trades or technology-related opportunities.

When the crisis subsides, a top priority of the federal and state governments will be to identify and address any educational losses and assess the impact of the crisis on students' educational attainment so that they can quickly mitigate any deficiencies. Education service providers will need to be well-positioned to assess and provide learning tools. However, without the above requested support, we will not be able to retain our specialized workforce and our future operations will be disrupted.

Thank you for supporting the American education sector.

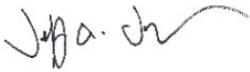
³ https://www.nwea.org/content/uploads/2020/05/Collaborative-Brief_Covid19-Slide-APR20.pdf

Respectfully submitted,



Maria A. Pallante
AAP President and CEO

AAP | Association of American Publishers: The Association of American Publishers represents the leading education publishers in the United States on matters of law and policy, advocating for outcomes that incentivize the publication of transformational learning solutions, creative expression and professional content. As key contributors to both local markets and the global economy, our member companies invest in and help drive the intellectual advancements of students, schools, and American competitiveness.



Jeff Joseph
SIIA President and CEO

SIIA – Software Information and Industry Association: SIIA is the principal trade association for the software and digital content industry. We provide global services in government relations, business development, corporate education, and intellectual property protection to the leading companies that are setting the pace for the digital age. With over 800 members spread over eight specialized divisions, SIIA provides a voice for its membership on the importance of information to promote a competitive, fair, and innovative digital economy. Our members include software publishers, financial trading and investment services, specialized and B2B publishers, and education technology service providers.



William G Harris, Ph.D.
ATP CEO

ATP – Association of Test Publishers: Established in 1992, The Association of Test Publishers (ATP) is an International nonprofit organization representing providers of tests and assessment tools and/or services related to clinical, occupational, certification, licensure, and educational uses. ATP advocates for the use of fair, reliable, and valid assessments, and provides expertise to national, state and International governments on legal and regulatory issues that impact testing.

With copies to:

The Honorable Betsy DeVos
United States Secretary of Education

The Honorable Steven Mnuchin
United States Secretary of Treasury

The Honorable Larry Kudlow
Director of the United States National Economic Council

The Honorable Michael Kratsios
Chief Technology Officer of the United States

The Honorable Richard Shelby
Chairman of the Senate Committee on Appropriations

The Honorable Patrick Leahy
Vice Chairman of the Senate Committee on Appropriations

The Honorable Nita Lowey
Chairwoman of the House Committee on Appropriations

The Honorable Kay Granger
Ranking Member of the House Committee on Appropriations

The Honorable Lamar Alexander
Chairman of the Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor & Pensions

The Honorable Patty Murray
Ranking Member of the Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor & Pensions

The Honorable Bobby Scott
Chairman of the House Education & Labor Committee

The Honorable Virginia Foxx
Ranking Member of the House Education & Labor Committee