



Accelerating Innovation in
Technology, Data & Media

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President-elect Joseph R. Biden
Vice President-elect Kamala D. Harris
1401 Constitution Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20230

Dear President-elect Biden and Vice President-elect Harris,

On behalf of the Software & Information Industry Association (SIIA), congratulations on your historic victory in November. SIIA and our member companies look forward to having an educator in the White House and are impressed by the strong transition team that will certainly set the U.S. Department of Education (ED) on a path for success come January 20, 2021 and beyond.

As the principal trade association for the education technology industry, our members work with K-12 schools and institutions of higher education to develop and deliver software applications, digital instructional content, online and distance learning services, online assessment, and related technologies for millions of learners across the nation.

The ongoing pandemic will have a long-term impact on schools and our nation's learners. Students require even more support from our education system. Our schools will have fewer resources due to state budget cuts. Strong leadership from the White House and ED is critical to lead us through the remainder of this crisis and into a post-pandemic world.

With that, we respectfully submit our education priorities for 2021 for your consideration as the Biden-Harris team takes the helm:

- *Seek further investments in education:* We echo the calls of our colleagues in K-12 and higher education in urging significant investment in education. Our membership supports the inclusion of "maintenance of effort" requirements to ensure our nation's learners are not impacted by this pandemic any more than they have already experienced. We similarly encourage ED to ensure that schools have access to the funding and guidance they need to measure the learning loss students may be experiencing due to extended school closures and to develop prompt intervention efforts.
- *Empower the Office of Education Technology:* National leadership on educational technology has never been more critical. The sharing of best practices and other



successes by educators will dramatically improve the ongoing implementation and deployment of remote, hybrid, and in-class learning. Strong leadership from ED, including an empowered Office of Education Technology, will provide educators and ed tech companies the tools necessary to support the success of America's students.

- *Ensure Educational Equity:* The quick transition to remote learning last spring highlighted many equity issues – connectivity, accessibility, and more. ESSA-mandated statewide summative assessments are critical to valid, comparable, equitable data to measure the impact of the pandemic on students and instructional systems across a state. We urge policymakers to make clear that states comply with assessment requirements during the 2020-21 school year, even if learning remains largely online and innovative assessment approaches are needed. Allow states to seek waivers for certain accountability components of their ESSA plans which would offer for the collection of crucial information without penalizing impacted parties for circumstances beyond their control.
- *Bolster Student Access to Quality Online and Digital Learning Experiences:* Access to high-quality, affordable online, and digital learning experiences in K-12 and higher education has never been more critical. We urge the U.S. Department of Education to provide State Education Agencies with clear guidance, which directs states to use specific federal funding for high-quality instructional materials, academic interventions, assessments, and other learning resources, such as professional development and supplemental instructional materials – including digital and print. ED should look to support and uphold all types of high-quality educational materials as different materials may serve different purposes in communities across America.
- *Elevate Social Emotional (SEL) and Mental Health Resources:* The availability of comprehensive SEL and mental health resources for students, educators, and parents is critical, especially for those communities hit hardest by COVID-19. Plans for immediate short-term interventions and longer-term holistic end-to-end models are necessary.
- *Expand Connectivity and Virtual Capabilities to Support Distance Learning:* Addressing the “homework gap” has never been more important. Funding for and updates to E-rate and dramatically expanding broadband access across all parts of our country should be top goals for the incoming administration.

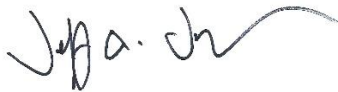


- *STEM Education:* Policies to support STEM education for early learners to learners looking to complete a credential to bolster their career are widely supported by SIIA member companies. Data consistently shows U.S. companies have openings for STEM-literate employees but cannot fill them due to a shortage of skilled workers. Our nation's ability to remain a global leader in competitiveness is at risk if we fail to develop scientifically and technically literate citizens, innovators, and future entrepreneurs.
- *Continued Technical Support for Protecting Student Data Privacy:* The Privacy Technical Assistance Center (PTAC) has been invaluable for the education community as we look to protect student data privacy. Technical assistance, webinars, and other trainings should continue.

Thank you for your time and consideration. We look forward to collaborating with you on these and other critical issues to support our nation's learners and improve educational outcomes.

Please contact Sara Kloek at skloek@siiia.net or at 202-789-4448 should you have additional questions.

Sincerely,



Jeff Joseph
President
Software & Information Industry Association