



July 1, 2020

Dear Senators Casey and Toomey:

There is no clearer example of the uncertainties created by the COVID-19 pandemic than the challenges public schools are facing as they close out this school year and look towards reopening in the fall.

Between an anticipated state revenue shortfall of nearly \$5 billion ([IFO](#)) and estimated local revenue losses at the school district level (from local earned income tax, property tax collection, etc.) as high as \$1 billion or more ([PASBO](#))—on top of an estimated \$325 million lost at the end of this school year—administrators and school boards are struggling to piece together adequate budgets for FY 2020-21. The result in many districts could be core program cuts, shortage of critical classroom resources, and teacher and support staff furloughs.

All Pennsylvania's public schools are being challenged right now, but some are suffering more than others. As is so often the case, the impact will fall most heavily on school districts in the poorest communities, particularly those serving communities of color. These districts struggled to raise sufficient revenues in the best of times. The COVID-19 pandemic and resulting school closures only intensified the inequities between these schools and those from wealthier communities.

That is why, on behalf of Pennsylvania's 1.7 million public school students—those who would feel the brunt of these potential cutbacks—*PA Schools Work* urges you to support significant, flexible funding for K-12 education in the next phase of emergency COVID-19 response legislation of at least \$175 billion. In addition, given the continued need for remote instruction in many communities, Congress must also take action to ensure universal access to the internet for all families with children so that no child is denied access to education.

PA Schools Work, a coalition 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, including funding for public schools in the CARES Act. Yet more funding is sorely needed to make up for lost local revenue and steady the finances of state governments that are facing added costs and shortfalls of their own.

The \$13.5 billion in K-12 school funding contained in the CARES Act is a small fraction of the \$79 billion the federal government provided through the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act in response to the Great Recession. With the U.S. officially in recession since February and the

likelihood that this economic downturn will be much deeper than in 2009, the impacts on schools could far exceed the damage of the \$1 billion state funding cut of 2011, which led to widespread cuts in academic programs and the termination of 27,000 teachers and other school personnel jobs.

The amount of funding earmarked for K-12 public schools in Pennsylvania through the CARES Act—about \$524 million— is less than half the expected local school revenue shortfalls, not even considering the added costs of COVID-19 to districts for both the end of this school year, and in preparing schools for the logistics of a return to in-person instruction and any remedial education necessary in the fall. The \$175 billion nationwide investment is still very much needed to fully protect our students.

We urge you and your colleagues to act in the same bipartisan way that you have with the earlier COVID-19 measures and promptly approve a \$175 billion emergency public education funding package and an initiative for providing internet access to all families with children.

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
ACLAMO (Latin American Community Action of Montgomery County)
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 Association of School Business Officials
Pennsylvania Budget & Policy Center
Pennsylvania Immigration and Citizenship Coalition (PICC)
Pennsylvania Partnerships for Children
Pennsylvania Principals Association
Pennsylvania School Librarians Association
Pennsylvania School Boards Association
Pennsylvania Superintendents' Association
Philadelphia Federation of Teachers
Phoenixville Area School District
Public Citizens for Children + Youth
The Public Interest Law Center
Urban League of Philadelphia