

**Congress of the United States**  
**Washington, DC 20515**

July 22, 2020

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi  
Speaker  
United States House of Representatives  
1236 Longworth House Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Kevin McCarthy  
Minority Leader  
United States House of Representatives  
2468 Rayburn House Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Speaker Pelosi and Leader McCarthy,

We thank you for your leadership and efforts to protect the health and economic well-being of Americans during the COVID-19 pandemic. As Congress considers additional relief efforts to mitigate the severe disruption caused by COVID-19, we write to ask you to prioritize critically needed funding and resources to help our nation's schools re-open safely when they are able to do so.

As you know, school closures occurred in quick succession this Spring as state and local governments took decisive measures to contain the spread of COVID-19. These closures have taken an enormous toll on the education of children, especially those who are marginalized, vulnerable, or have special needs. If left in place, they would be sure to intensify existing inequalities and have a lasting impact on an entire generation of Americans.

Although it is difficult to accurately predict how much learning has been impacted by school closures, existing research on the impacts of missing school indicate the average student could begin this school year having lost as much as a third of their expected learning gains<sup>1</sup>. Schools, however, afford more than just the delivery of instruction and learning. They serve as mental health resources, provide reliable meals, help students fight drug dependency, and protect children from abusive parents.

How to safely re-open schools is one of the toughest decisions facing parents, teachers, and administrators today, and it is not entirely clear what role children play in transmission. It is therefore critical that our schools have policies in place to mitigate the spread of COVID-19 and help protect any vulnerable adult educators or faculty.

Schools will need clear and comprehensive guidance from their state and local leaders on how to safely re-open, especially given the changing guidance from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). Recommendations released by national organizations such as the American Academy of Pediatrics and the National Education Association include providing adequate personal protective equipment, frequently cleaning and disinfecting touched surfaces, ensuring proper ventilation systems, and installing physical barriers to keep individuals at least 6 feet

---

<sup>1</sup> Kuhfeld, Megan, James Soland, Beth Tarasawa, Angela Johnson, Erik Ruzek, and Jing Liu. (2020). Projecting the potential impacts of COVID-19 school closures on academic achievement. (EdWorkingPaper: 20-226). Retrieved from Annenberg Institute at Brown University: <https://doi.org/10.26300/cdrv-yw05>

apart. Implementing these mitigation measures, while necessary, will be very costly, especially at a time when school and state budgets are strained. A recent analysis by the School Superintendents Association estimates these additional expenses will cost the average school district \$1.8 million.

We respectfully request that as Congress considers additional relief measures, you provide targeted but flexible funding for schools to aid them in re-opening when it is safe to do so. This funding should not supplant state funding to schools, but rather supplement their efforts to ensure school safety. We also ask that it not be withheld from schools that refrain from immediately re-opening their doors because of COVID-19 concerns, as schools should only re-open once they determine it is in the best interest of children, faculty, and the community.

We owe it to our kids, to our parents, and to the future of this nation to ensure the decisions we make on education in the COVID-19 pandemic today are the right ones. In the months ahead, we look forward to continuing to work with you in fighting this pandemic and helping secure a healthy and promising future for our children. Thank you for your attention to this matter and we look forward to working with you.

Sincerely,



ANTHONY GONZALEZ  
Member of Congress



JIMMY PANETTA  
Member of Congress



STEPHANIE MURPHY  
Member of Congress



BRYAN STEIL  
Member of Congress



THOMAS R. SUOZZI  
Member of Congress



DAVID P. JOYCE  
Member of Congress



SCOTT H. PETERS  
Member of Congress



ANTHONY BRINDISI  
Member of Congress



MAX ROSE  
Member of Congress



ELISSA SLOTKIN  
Member of Congress



KURT SCHRADER  
Member of Congress



JOSH GOTTHEIMER  
Member of Congress



KATHLEEN RICE  
Member of Congress



DANIEL W. LIPINSKI  
Member of Congress