



1615 Duke Street | Alexandria, VA 22314
Phone: 703.528.0700 | Fax: 703.841.1543
www.aasa.org

December 21, 2020

U.S. Senate
U.S. House of Representatives

Dear Members of Congress,

On behalf of AASA, The School Superintendents Association, representing the nation's 10,000+ public school superintendents and the students and schools they serve, I write to share the following comments to the COVID relief package. This bill is a classic example of well-intended and still far too little, far too late. We are grateful for the support Congress is able to provide, but would stop short of calling this a courageous or bold response to the COVID pandemic, particularly as a response to its impact on schools and students.

We applaud the inclusion of dedicated funding to support K12 public education, which has been upended by the pandemic, a disruption whose consequences will be felt for years to come. Coupled with support for early child care and child nutrition, this bill is a step in the right direction in supporting our nation's youngest learners. We thank you for the extension of the Corona Virus Relief Fund (CRF) and for the policy nuance to allow for paid leave without mandating it, thereby avoiding an unfunded mandate on public schools. We thank you for your efforts to ensure support for public education and to strengthen transparency and accountability where federal funding is available to support private schools.

The exclusion of dedicated support for the homework gap, via funding dedicated to the E-Rate program, is a significant missed opportunity. This omission is especially frustrating when we know there was bipartisan, bicameral support to ensure that the 15+ million students who lack home internet access and devices would have access to connectivity as recently as five days ago. At a time when the reality of remote learning is expected to persist into the next school year, the idea that any federal response to the COVID pandemic doesn't support remote learning access is short sighted at best. While there is no justification for the exclusion of support for the homework gap, we understand the political pressures that resulted in the exclusion of state/local aid and liability protections for employers. We will prioritize these three provisions in a subsequent aid package.

AASA looks to this bill as an initial investment in the broad, more coordinated response to better address the nation's need in response to the COVID pandemic. We look forward working with this Congress to see this bill over the finish line, and stand ready to work with the new administration and new Congress to deliver the support and resources still needed.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Noelle Ellerson Ng'. The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Noelle Ellerson Ng
Associate Executive Director, Advocacy & Governance
AASA, The School Superintendents Association