

Dear Congressman,

As a constituent, I urge you to support a stimulus package that takes into account the devastating toll the COVID-19 virus is having on the state of New York, its people and our local governments. However, as an educator I am particularly concerned with the toll the virus is taking on our students, public schools, colleges and universities.

Our nation is struggling to contain the spread of COVID-19, and New York State is the epicenter of this crisis. Our state is in desperate need of critical resources and we need them now. We are asking you to act quickly to enact a new COVID-19 stimulus package that provides much needed support to New York State.

While we are pleased to see that Congress has taken broad actions to help stabilize the American economy, its workers and the businesses that employ them, we believe the next COVID-19 pandemic stimulus package must provide relief for all Americans. Accordingly, I would urge you to ensure it includes the following provisions.

The CARES Act, which was signed by the president on March 27, 2020, included a maintenance of effort (MOE), for education that would put the federal aid in jeopardy if the state made cuts. The MOE included two problematic provisions: it allowed the state to apply for a waiver to the MOE that would allow cuts to education, without risking federal aid, if there is a decline in revenue; and it allowed a three-year average to be used to determine the level of funding as opposed to the last year. Both of these provisions are harmful to education, health care and other programs. Therefore, this must be remedied in CARES 2 by providing a true MOE, with no waiver for the state to shirk its duty to fund education and no three-year average calculation.

For elementary and secondary education it should: provide at least \$175 billion for another round of Education Stabilization Funds to distribute to states, allocated via a formula, for public pre-K through post-secondary education to fill budget gaps caused by declining state revenues due to the COVID-19 national emergency; reject Education Secretary Betsy DeVos' "microgrants" and other voucher schemes that siphon funding from public schools and undermine accountability; and provide at least \$2 billion to the E-Rate program to address the "homework gap" — where millions of students are at risk of falling behind because they do not have the required technology or internet access at home.

For students and higher education institutions it should: cancel monthly federal student loan payments and interest accruals, including commercially held Federal Family Education Loans (FFEL) and Perkins Loans; forgive at least \$30,000 in student loan debt per student after this emergency ends; modify the "between terms" restriction for students on unemployment insurance to allow individuals to receive payments during the summer; ensure unemployment insurance coverage for laid-off workers who are not

normally eligible — so laid-off workers with no reasonable assumption of continued employment, such as adjunct and contingent faculty at colleges and universities — are covered; and provide additional federal assistance to state governments for public higher education institutions, including community colleges.

For the safety of educators and all workers it should: allocate at least \$56 million for personal protective equipment (PPE) for teachers, school related professionals (SRPs) and other school staff who interact with students and their families, including food service workers who prepare and distribute meals, custodians who clean and disinfect buildings, security officers and technology specialists; provide training and guidance on mitigating the transmission of the coronavirus for teachers, SRPs and other school staff; provide "hero" or premium pay for frontline workers; and task the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) with crafting emergency standards to help protect frontline workers at risk of contracting the virus.

So that schools can continue to feed their students, and families do not have to face food and/or economic uncertainty it should: ensure that school districts that are feeding their communities are fully reimbursed for all meals and their delivery; extend the Pandemic Electronic Benefit Transfer (P-EBT) program through the summer of 2020 for students eligible for free or reduced-price meals; increase monthly minimum Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefits from \$16 to \$30 and raise the maximum benefit by 15 percent; provide increased support for Medicaid; extend and expand the unemployment insurance provisions of the CARES Act; extend and expand the paid sick leave provisions of the CARES Act; and provide a second round of stimulus payments that are at least as robust as the first round of the CARES Act and expand and ensures eligibility.

Finally, I believe that the next COVID-19 stimulus package should: protect COVID-19 patients from surprise medical bills; eliminate out-of-pocket costs for all medical care related to COVID-19 for all patients — not just for care delivered in hospitals; provide extended COBRA premium relief that includes federal, state and local employees; allocate at least \$2 billion in funding to ensure all eligible voters can actually vote this November, while protecting public health and safety; fully repeal the Government Pension Offset (GPO) and Windfall Elimination Provision (WEP) that unfairly reduce Social Security benefits earned by educators; allow pension plans governed by the Employee Retirement Income Security Act (ERISA) to increase their amortization periods from seven to 15 years; ensure that the United States Postal Service remains solvent; and fully repeal the cap on state and local tax (SALT) deductions.

Thank you for your consideration of this important matter. I respectfully ask that you bring up this issue with your leadership. I look forward to a reply to my letter.