

June 8, 2020

The Honorable Charles Schumer  
United States Senate  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Kirsten Gillibrand  
United States Senate  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Gregory Meeks  
The Honorable Nydia Velázquez  
The Honorable Yvette Clarke  
The Honorable Max Rose  
The Honorable Adriano Espaillat  
The Honorable José Serrano  
United States House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Grace Meng  
The Honorable Hakeem Jeffries  
The Honorable Jerrold Nadler  
The Honorable Carolyn Maloney  
The Honorable Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez  
The Honorable Eliot Engel  
United States House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Senate Minority Leader Schumer, Senator Gillibrand, and the New York City delegation to the United States House of Representatives:

As organizations working with children and families in New York City, **we write to urge you in the strongest possible terms to ensure that the next coronavirus response bill provides at least \$205 billion in supplemental funding for public education, including targeted allocations to support students with disabilities, English Language Learners/multilingual learners, and students experiencing homelessness.** Our public schools are facing immense and unprecedented challenges as a result of COVID-19; without substantial federal support, the current crisis will have lifelong consequences for a generation of children whose education has been interrupted for reasons beyond their control.

Like the pandemic itself, school closures have had a disproportionate impact on historically marginalized communities and have further exacerbated existing inequities. Though educators and public officials have worked diligently to provide remote learning opportunities, thousands of New York City students—through no fault of their own—have been unable to participate meaningfully in remote instruction. For example:

- Students who did not have access to high-speed internet or computers at home and had to [wait over a month](#) to receive a remote learning device from the New York City Department of Education (DOE) or struggled to use new technology due to low digital literacy or other barriers;
- Students with disabilities who depend on schools for a range of services and therapies, some of which [do not easily translate](#) to online instruction;
- English Language Learners/multilingual learners (ELLs/MLLs) who are not receiving the same [supports](#) available to them in the classroom and whose parents may not be able to help them with assignments available only in English;
- Students who are living in [homeless shelters](#) or overcrowded apartments and lack a quiet spot to study;

- Youth whose days are now spent caring for younger siblings or [working](#) to help support their families in light of the economic hardship brought on by the pandemic;
- Students in juvenile detention who have not had access to live teacher instruction or regular access to computers, special education services, and coursework; and
- Students whose parents or other relatives have been ill or passed away.

As we head into summer and the next school year, students who have lost instructional time or had difficulty adapting to remote learning will need targeted and sustained support to get caught up and ensure that learning loss does not lead to a downward academic spiral. In addition, we anticipate that the trauma of the pandemic will significantly increase the need for comprehensive emotional, behavioral, and mental health supports at school; many students will have experienced significant loss or hardship that will otherwise interfere with their ability to learn.

However, New York City is facing a massive budget shortfall at the precise moment our schools need additional resources. While the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act allocated \$13.5 billion for K-12 education, Governor Cuomo used New York's share of this funding to offset identically-sized cuts to the State's education budget. Governor Cuomo has warned that declining state revenues may soon put education funding on the chopping block even further, and much like the budget cuts enacted in the wake of the 2008 financial crisis, New York City schools will likely be [hit particularly hard](#). Mayor de Blasio has already proposed more than \$600 million in cuts to education for the coming year, and unless the federal government intervenes, we fear the situation will grow far worse.

While the HEROES Act, as passed by the House of Representatives, was a step in the right direction, \$60 billion is insufficient in light of the [financial meltdown](#) threatening our schools. We urgently need Congress to save our schools from draconian cuts and provide the resources needed to address the substantial learning loss and trauma that students have experienced. In addition, it is critical that there is funding specifically targeted to supporting students with disabilities, ELLs/MLLs, and students who are homeless, as these populations are too often the first to fall through the cracks in a crisis.

As you work to negotiate the next coronavirus response bill, we ask that you build upon the initial investment in education made in the CARES Act and include explicit provisions to ensure that federal dollars are used to promote equity and to supplement—not supplant—existing state and local funds. Specifically, we join our national partners in urging you to include:

- **\$175 billion in educational stabilization funds for states**, at least 90 percent of which should be distributed directly to local education agencies.
- **\$13 billion for the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)**. Approximately one in five New York City students receives special education services, and schools urgently need additional resources to meet their needs, both now and in the challenging school year to come. In addition, we strongly urge you to oppose the inclusion of any waivers to the IDEA or Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 in future stimulus bills; federal law *already* allows for flexibility in meeting individual students' educational needs.
- **\$12 billion in Title I funding** to support students from low-income backgrounds.

- **\$4 billion for the E-rate program** to help address the digital divide.
- **\$1 billion for Title III of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act** to help schools meet the unique needs of ELLs/MLLs and their families.
- **\$500 million for the McKinney-Vento Education for Homeless Children and Youth (EHCY) program** to assist schools in identifying and supporting students in temporary housing. One in ten New York City public school students experienced homelessness last year, a number that may rise even further with surging unemployment rates.

Even in our darkest days, we have to continue to invest in the future, and our schools are our best hope. We strongly urge you to make a substantial investment in public education in the next stimulus bill, as supplemental funding to support students, families, and educators is critical to New York's ability to make a full recovery from the pandemic.

Thank you for your continued advocacy on behalf of New Yorkers during this challenging time.

Respectfully,

Advocates for Children of New York

AHRC New York City

Alliance for Quality Education

America On Tech

Asian Americans for Equality

Big Picture Learning

Bronx Developmental Disabilities Council

Brooklyn Defender Services

BUILD NYC

Center for Independence of the Disabled, NY

The Child Center of NY

Children's Aid

Children's Defense Fund-NY

The Children's Law Center

Citizens' Committee for Children of New York

Citywide Council on Special Education (CCSE)

Class Size Matters

Coalition for Asian American Children and Families (CACF)

The Collaborative for Inclusive Education

Committee for Hispanic Children & Families (CHCF)

Community Education Council District 16 (CEC16)

Community Education Council District 32 (CEC32)  
Community Inclusion & Development Alliance  
Cooke School and Institute  
Court Appointed Special Advocates – NYC  
Eskolta School Research and Design  
Everyone Reading, Inc.  
Expanded Schools  
Family Advocacy Clinic, Fordham University School of Law  
Fill in the GAP  
Friends of Island Academy  
Futures and Options  
Goddard Riverside  
Good Shepherd Services  
Graham Windham  
Hispanic Federation  
Hunts Point Alliance for Children  
INCLUDEnyc  
IntegrateNYC  
Internationals Network for Public Schools  
Jackson Heights People for Public Schools  
Lawyers for Children, Inc.  
Liberation HS  
Literacy Trust  
Manhattan Community Board 2  
Mental Health Association of New York City (dba Vibrant Emotional Health)  
Metropolitan Russian American Parents Association  
Mobilization for Justice, Inc.  
NAACP New York State Conference  
National Association of Social Workers – NYC Chapter  
New Alternatives for Children, Inc.  
The New York Foundling  
New York Junior League  
New York Lawyers for the Public Interest  
New York Performance Standards Consortium  
NYS Coalition of 853 Schools

NYU School of Law Education Advocacy Clinic  
NYU School of Law Family Defense Clinic  
Paradigm Time LLC  
ParentChild+  
Parents for Inclusive Education (PIE)  
The Partnership for the Homeless  
Promise Project  
Queens High School Presidents' Council  
Read Alliance  
The Right to Read Project  
Rose F. Kennedy Center UCEDD at Einstein/Montefiore  
Sheltering Arms Children and Family Services  
Sinergia Inc.  
South Asian Youth Action  
Special Education Law and Advocacy Field Clinic, Benjamin L. Cardozo School of Law  
Special Support Services  
Staten Island Developmental Disabilities Council Education Committee  
Staten Island Natural Childbirth  
Teach for America New York  
Teachers College, Raising Educational Achievement Coalition of Harlem (REACH)  
United We Stand of New York  
The Urban Assembly  
YMCA of Greater New York  
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