

July 20, 2020

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
Majority Leader
United States Senate
317 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington DC, 20510

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
Speaker
United States House of Representatives
1236 Longworth House Office Building
Washington DC, 20515

The Honorable Chuck Schumer
Minority Leader
United States Senate
322 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington DC, 20510

The Honorable Kevin McCarthy
Minority Leader
United States House of Representatives
2468 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington DC, 20515

Dear Majority Leader McConnell, Leader Schumer, Speaker Pelosi, and Leader McCarthy:

On behalf of the undersigned organizations representing public health, medical providers, and advocates for children and families committed to advancing the health and well-being of children, we write to express the urgent need for increased federal education and health funding so that schools can safely reopen and our health care system can respond to the increasing medical needs brought on by the COVID-19 epidemic.

Schools are fundamental to child and adolescent development and well-being. They provide students with academic instruction, social and emotional skills, safety, reliable nutrition, physical, speech and mental health therapies, and opportunities for physical activity, among other benefits. Beyond supporting the educational development of children and adolescents, schools play a critical role in addressing racial and social inequity.

In order for schools to be able to reopen while keeping students, teachers, and staff safe, Congress must provide sufficient funding to help schools adapt and make necessary changes and accommodations. Schools will need funds to purchase personal protective equipment (PPE) for teachers and implement strategies such as health monitoring, modified staffing schedules, cleaning, and modified busing procedures. They will need additional resources to meet the needs of children with disabilities, special education needs, and special health care needs. Schools will also need to be prepared to address a wide range of mental health needs of children and staff when schools reopen. None of this can be accomplished under existing budgetary conditions.

State budgets are facing unprecedented strain due to decreased revenues and greater expenditures. Families experiencing unemployment are also dealing with loss of the health insurance. Many of these families are now eligible for Medicaid and increased enrollment will lead to further financial strains on states.

Together, Medicaid and K-12 education account for more than half of state budgets. Without urgent relief, states will be left with no option but to implement devastating cuts to essential health and education programs. We are particularly concerned about the impact these cuts will have on African American, American Indian/Alaska Native, and Latinx children whose inequities in educational and health care access would be exacerbated. Cuts to Medicaid threaten the viability of the health care infrastructure serving low-income and under-resourced communities, making it more difficult for children, families, and communities to get the care they need. This would further undermine the ability of communities to respond to COVID-19 and would hamper efforts to reopen schools and businesses.

States need Congress to provide more federal financial support for both Medicaid and education. Supporting one without the other will continue to threaten both. This additional funding is needed as soon as possible

since schools are actively planning for the upcoming school year and insufficient funding makes it harder for them to comprehensively plan.

As such, we urge Congress to include robust funding for education in the next legislative package in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. **Specifically, we urge at least \$200 billion in additional funding for K-12 education and programs that support marginalized students that are most likely to be affected by missing in-person instruction.** Money must be available to all schools regardless of their timeline for reopening. Schools in areas with high rates of COVID-19 spread may need to consider delaying a return to fulltime in-person instruction, and these schools will need the same or greater federal investments, not fewer. In addition, **we strongly urge Congress to increase the federal government's share of Medicaid costs by raising the federal medical assistance percentage (FMAP) at least another 5.8 percentage points.**

We call on our leaders to provide the resources necessary to ensure that funding does not stand in the way of safely educating and caring for our children.

Sincerely,

Alliance for Strong Families and Communities
American Academy of Pediatrics
American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees
American Federation of Teachers
American Muslim Health Professionals
American Physical Therapy Association
Association of Asian Pacific Community Health Organizations (AAPCHO)
Association of Maternal & Child Health Programs
Children's Defense Fund
Children's Health Fund
Children's Hospital of Philadelphia
Children's Vision Massachusetts
Community Catalyst
Family Voices
First Focus Campaign for Children
Healthy Schools Campaign
Marion County Commission on Youth, Inc.
National Association for Children's Behavioral Health
National Association of Pediatric Nurse Practitioners
National Association of State Mental Health Program Directors
National Health Law Program
Prevent Blindness
Prevent Blindness Georgia
Prevent Blindness Iowa
Prevent Blindness Ohio
Prevent Blindness Texas
Prevent Blindness Wisconsin
Public Advocacy for Kids (PAK)
Reach Out and Read
School-Based Health Alliance
Texas Parent to Parent
The Children's Agenda

The National Alliance to Advance Adolescent Health
United Way Worldwide