

April 8, 2020

Senator Mitch McConnell
Majority Leader
U.S. Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Representative Nancy Pelosi
Speaker of the House
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Senator Charles Schumer
Minority Leader
U.S. Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Representative Kevin McCarthy
Minority Leader
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

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

Thank you for your strong and nimble leadership to stem the severe impacts of the global health crisis on the U.S. education ecosystem. As you craft the next package of assistance for the American people, we respectfully urge you to support the educational publishers, assessment companies, and education service providers that are so critical to achieving both national and state objectives, from advancing individual student progress to promoting educational equity in both our physical and virtual classrooms. These private sector partners help to sustain our educational infrastructure and drive the competitive success of the United States.

The pandemic has not only disrupted the current school year for the education sector, it has threatened the longer-term sustainability of these businesses at a time when high quality materials and innovative services are more critical than ever. Indeed, there is no question that educators and students now need—and will continue to need—access to the tremendously important resource materials, assessments, and distance learning solutions that the private sector produces, but the reality is that shrinking state revenues and changing budgetary timelines have created financial uncertainty for everyone involved. Moreover, the financial impact is not limited to students in K-12 or college. Rather, it has reached adult education and worker training, as well as testing, accountability, and accreditation services at the precise moment when millions of newly unemployed Americans will require dedicated training and better skills to survive the long arm of economic disruption.

For all these reasons, we the undersigned associations respectfully request your support as you work to protect American businesses and further stimulate the economy. We note that although the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act is providing some important and immediate relief to the education sector, it offers only limited direct relief to the mid-size businesses, not-for-profits, and private-sector institutions that we represent.

With appreciation for all that you are doing to support the public and private sectors at this difficult time, we have outlined below our urgent requests and recommendations.

Stimulus Request and Recommendations

Support for Education Businesses

Provide Loans, Funding, and Paycheck Protection: We urge you to provide low interest loans and other support for the private sector companies that serve the nation's schools. Additionally, we ask that you expressly provide that education publishers and service providers have access to the Treasury Department's Economic Stabilization Fund. We ask that you provide the Department of Education with funds to ensure the viability of education service providers, including the testing that underpins federal accountability requirements designed to promote educational equity. And we ask you to ensure that education publishers and service providers that are not-for-profit entities will have access to the Paycheck Protection Program.

K-12 Education

Further Invest in the Education Stabilization Fund: We request \$175 billion in additional aid. Echoing our colleagues' letter¹, we urge a bold investment of \$175 billion in K-12 in order to meet the ongoing and growing challenges the American education system is facing and will need to overcome as schools and institutions return to full strength following the pandemic. We also urge the inclusion of "maintenance of effort" requirements to ensure that states keep school funding levels constant, even as additional federal funding is appropriated to address concerns.

In the current environment of disruption, it is challenging but no less important to assess and quickly rectify learning deficiencies. In order to ensure that education service providers have the business certainty that they need to continue providing products and services, we urge you to provide funding to ensure that federal and state governments can fully meet their obligations to ensure accountability in the next school year.

To instill longer-term certainty, we urge policy makers to make clear that the state assessment requirement and the associated accountability requirements are waived *only* for the 2019-2020 school year, and that it is your expectation that states will resume compliance with these provisions during the 2020-21 school year, even if learning remains largely online and innovative assessment approaches are needed. You could accomplish yet further clarity by directing states to use their funding for curriculum building, academic interventions, and other learning resources – including digital and print – as well as related assessment support in the coming school year, whether schools open or operate virtually.

Regarding the educational success of students with disabilities, we urge the Department of Education to withhold its consideration of additional waivers for students with disabilities covered by the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) and the Rehabilitation Act. We respectfully submit that waivers on IDEA services put a key at-risk group further at-risk because students with disabilities require critical intervention and assessment support to maintain and measure both annual growth and "catch up" growth. At the same time, we do hope the Department will ensure the availability of additional training resources for providers who are working under these important laws. Such resources would successfully increase the capacity and expertise of the providers working in a telepractice/distance learning service delivery model—a model that is critical to the future but which few, if any, providers are currently equipped to execute.

¹ <http://blogs.edweek.org/edweek/campaign-k-12/Edu%20GROUP%20funding%20letter%20040620%20FINAL.pdf>

Drastically Expand Connectivity and Virtual Capabilities to Support Distance Learning: We urge you to provide robust resources to ensure that all learners are able to continue their educations through distance learning by including funding to expand connectivity and broadband access at schools, libraries, or at home in an effort to close the “homework gap.” This can be done in part by supporting the allocation of \$2 billion to school districts for Wi-Fi hotspots, connected devices, and mobile broadband Internet service. The existing E-Rate program is best suited to administer the funds due to its vast experience working with schools and libraries.

Bolster Student Access to Instructional Materials for Remote and In-person Learning: We urge you to provide states with \$6 billion in formula funds to meet the immediate needs of districts to procure quality, remote-learning-enabled K-12 educational curricula for the 2020-2021 school year, including remote learning upgrades to products they have already procured. These funds could also support states' and districts' development and implementation of comprehensive plans for the integration of remote learning solutions, ensuring continuity between in-school and at-home learning to mitigate student learning loss during this global pandemic.

Encourage Assessment Innovation: Funding should also be provided for the development of research-based, commercial solutions to deliver innovative virtual and online learning and assessment practices, so the U.S. education system is better able to respond to the current crises. Many organizations are already moving in this direction, but additional resources are urgently needed to ensure wide and effective application and implementation of new innovations in this space.

This funding should not only be applied to the development of the tools, but also to the research on how socio-economic, physical and/or learning disabilities challenge access to online materials for both assessments and online learning. In other words, the act of providing an online curriculum and assessments does not in itself mean that students will have online access or computer equipment. Additionally, providers need to thoroughly research and implement accommodations for fair and equitable access for English language learners and students with disabilities.

Encourage Virtual and Online Learning Set-aside Funds: Grants for the development of innovative virtual and online learning activities are of critical importance as schools and educators move learning to an online format. We urge you to support K-12 schools—especially those in high-poverty zones and designated as Title I schools—with additional funding to support those educator and student populations that do not have adequate access to broadband and digital learning, software, and hardware. While the CARES Act appropriates \$13.5 billion to schools—90% of which are Title I schools—there are no additional funds appropriated strictly toward Title IV part A programs. Title I schools, which have access to Title IV Part A block grants, would benefit from a supplemental \$1.6 billion in Title IV Part A funding beyond what is currently being appropriated for FY 2020-2021.

Higher Education

Higher Education Stabilization Fund to Support Learners and Institutions of Higher Education: We echo our colleagues' letter² and request \$50 billion in direct assistance in the form of grants to current learners to continue, return, or begin their college studies as well as those who have lost their jobs in the wake of the COVID-19 crisis and are in need of workforce and career training to learn new skills, gain new or refresh their certifications, and prepare for future employment in high-demand sectors and industries. We support additional funding and expanded eligibility for Pell Grants to cover unemployed workers and additional current learners to help as many people as possible gain access to higher educational opportunities.

² <https://www.acenet.edu/Documents/Higher-Education-Supplemental-Summary-Memo-031920.pdf>

Similarly, to ensure learners of all ages have access to educational and training opportunities, we urge you to consider providing grants and/or low-interest loans to help institutions support millions of students and displaced workers with on-campus or virtual/online learning.

And with respect to technology, we echo our colleagues' letter referenced above by requesting \$7.8 billion to help with the costs of technology needed for digital learning. Additional funding to support college and university students as they transition to online and virtual learning is imperative for students, especially college students affected most by inequities in accessing digital and online learning.

Workforce

Create Lifelong Learning Accounts to Better Support Learners in this Evolving Economy: We urge \$50 billion in additional aid. U.S. education and workforce training structures and systems need to be revamped to reflect the rapid changes in our economy due to crises and shocks as well as the changing nature of work. In order to effectively support learners and workers to prepare, train, or retrain for in-demand professions, we support the paring of educational funds with tuition reimbursement or other eligible aid so learners can pursue employer-sponsored, college backed programs or to allow employees to participate in apprenticeship and job training programs in the trades.

Bolster the National Dislocated Worker Grants (DWGs): We request \$1 billion in additional aid. Respectfully, we ask you to provide additional funding to DWGs in order to strengthen the resources states and local initiatives have at their disposal to respond to this sudden, large, and unexpected wave of loss of jobs unemployment and meet the increased demand for WIOA employment and training services.

When the crisis subsides, a top priority of the federal and state governments will be to identify and address any educational losses and assess the impact of the crisis on students' educational attainment so that they can quickly mitigate any deficiencies. Education service providers will need to be well-positioned to assess and provide learning tools. However, without the above requested support, we will not be able to retain our specialized workforce and our future operations will be disrupted.

Thank you for supporting the American education sector.

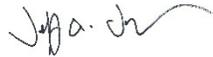
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Respectfully submitted,



Maria A. Pallante
AAP President and CEO

AAP | Association of American Publishers: The Association of American Publishers represents the leading education publishers in the United States on matters of law and policy, advocating for outcomes that incentivize the publication of transformational learning solutions, creative expression and professional content. As key contributors to both local markets and the global economy, our member companies invest in and help drive the intellectual advancements of students, schools, and American competitiveness.



Jeff Joseph
SIIA President and CEO

SIIA – Software Information and Industry Association: SIIA is the principal trade association for the software and digital content industry. We provide global services in government relations, business development, corporate education, and intellectual property protection to the leading companies that are setting the pace for the digital age. With over 800 members spread over eight specialized divisions, SIIA provides a voice for its membership on the importance of information to promote a competitive, fair, and innovative digital economy. Our members include software publishers, financial trading and investment services, specialized and B2B publishers, and education technology service providers.



William G Harris, Ph.D.
ATP CEO

ATP – Association of Test Publishers: Established in 1992, The Association of Test Publishers (ATP) is an International nonprofit organization representing providers of tests and assessment tools and/or services related to clinical, occupational, certification, licensure, and educational uses. ATP advocates for the use of fair, reliable, and valid assessments, and provides expertise to national, state and International governments on legal and regulatory issues that impact testing.

With copies to:

The Honorable Betsy DeVos
United States Secretary of Education

The Honorable Steven Mnuchin
United States Secretary of Treasury

The Honorable Larry Kudlow
Director of the United States National Economic Council

The Honorable Michael Kratsios
Chief Technology Officer of the United States