

# United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

July 31, 2020

The Honorable Mitch McConnell  
Senate Majority Leader  
Room S-230, U.S. Capitol  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Charles E. Schumer  
Senate Minority Leader  
Room S-221, U.S. Capitol  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Richard Shelby  
Chairman  
Senate Appropriations Committee  
Room S-128, U.S. Capitol  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Patrick Leahy  
Vice Chairman  
Senate Appropriations Committee  
Room S-128, U.S. Capitol  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Leader McConnell, Leader Schumer, Chairman Shelby, and Vice Chairman Leahy:

We write to oppose conditioning education funds in the next coronavirus relief package on the reopening of elementary and secondary schools for in-person instruction.

Over the course of the summer, a national debate has raged over the operating status of elementary and secondary schools this fall. During this time, state and local school leaders have been desperately seeking additional federal financial assistance and clear, scientifically-based federal guidance to support reopening schools safely in-person this fall.

Instead, the Republican-controlled Senate has failed to act on any major new coronavirus relief legislation since March. For his part, President Trump has threatened to withhold federal funds from schools that don't reopen in person while trying to politically influence the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) school reopening guidance. Meanwhile, COVID-19 cases are surging throughout the country—with records for new infections being broken almost daily<sup>1</sup>, deaths rising<sup>2</sup>, and no end in sight.

With months wasted and without taking responsibility for his own failure of leadership that contributed to the recent surge in cases—President Trump continues to demand that schools reopen for in-person instruction at any cost in just a few short weeks. Congress should not be complicit in the President's dangerous game that would risk the health and lives of students and school personnel for an empty talking point. America's schoolchildren and educators are not the President's sacrificial lambs—to be used to claim a false victory over the, still, out of control virus months before an election. Congress must reject any effort to condition federal assistance on schools reopening in person.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/07/16/world/coronavirus-updates.html>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2020/07/17/us/coronavirus-deaths.html>

Instead, Congress should provide federal assistance to elementary and secondary schools that gives state and local officials the tools and resources they need to ensure a safe and effective learning environment for students, including students from low-income families and students of color, and a safe and effective working environment for educators and staff—whether it be in-person, remote, or a hybrid model. The Coronavirus Child Care and Education Relief Act (S. 4112) would do that by providing an additional \$175 billion in assistance to elementary and secondary schools without regard to the operating status of schools and school districts. It also includes an additional \$30 billion to help communities disproportionately impacted by this crisis, students with disabilities, and students struggling without access to internet and technology.

Every one of us wants schools to reopen when it is safe to do so. But, facts and science must drive those decisions, not Presidential pipedreams or impatience. Thank you.

Sincerely,



Richard J. Durbin  
United States Senator

/s/ Jack Reed  
United States Senator

/s/ Chris Van Hollen  
United States Senator



Tim Kaine  
United States Senator



Ron Wyden  
United States Senator



Sheldon Whitehouse  
United States Senator



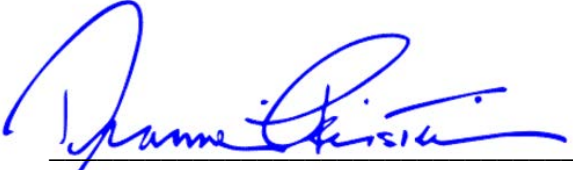
Elizabeth Warren  
United States Senator

/s/ Robert P. Casey, Jr.  
United States Senator




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Tammy Baldwin  
United States Senator



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Dianne Feinstein  
United States Senator



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Richard Blumenthal  
United States Senator



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Mark R. Warner  
United States Senator



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Sherrod Brown  
United States Senator




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Kamala D. Harris  
United States Senator



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Jeffrey A. Merkley  
United States Senator



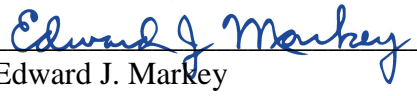
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Mazie K. Hirono  
United States Senator



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Tammy Duckworth  
United States Senator



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Edward J. Markey  
United States Senator



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Debbie Stabenow  
United States Senator



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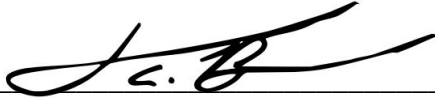
Brian Schatz  
United States Senator



Tina Smith  
United States Senator

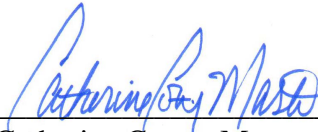


Amy Klobuchar  
United States Senator

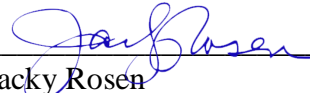


Cory A. Booker  
United States Senator

/s/ Michael F. Bennet  
United States Senator



Catherine Cortez Masto  
United States Senator



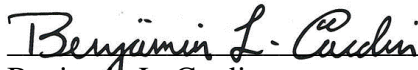
Jacky Rosen  
United States Senator



Kirsten Gillibrand  
United States Senator



Bernard Sanders  
United States Senator



Benjamin L. Cardin  
United States Senator



Gary C. Peters  
United States Senator

cc: The Honorable Roy Blunt, Chairman, Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human Services, Education, and Related Agencies  
The Honorable Patty Murray, Ranking Member, Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human Services, Education, and Related Agencies