COVID-19 Education Coalition Urges Improvements, More Money in Final Version of the HEALS Act

Washington, D.C., July 30, 2020 — The undersigned members of the COVID-19 Education Coalition offer the following statement on the Health, Economic Assistance, Liability Protection, and Schools (HEALS) Act:

We are deeply concerned with provisions of the HEALS Act, which proposes $70 billion to support K-12 schools in navigating the fallout from the COVID-19 global pandemic, two-thirds of which is tied to the physical reopening of school buildings. With many districts unable to safely reopen at this time because of high community transmission rates, many schools stand to lose out on a substantial portion of the HEALS Act’s promised resources, which they desperately need to ensure high-quality teaching and learning continues for the 2020-2021 school year. Additionally, the $70 billion allocated to K-12 schools is far short of the funding that national experts estimate will be necessary to fully support educators, students, and families at this time, especially those from marginalized groups disproportionately impacted by COVID-19. Many of our organizations believe that K-12 schools need between $175 billion and $200 billion.

Furthermore, we note that the HEALS Act fails to provide separate funding for a key priority: professional development for online learning. The spring 2020 transition to online learning was very challenging for multiple reasons, including the fact that many educators struggled to deliver instruction because they had not received adequate training. Now, with many districts elective to begin the school year fully or partially online, there is ample evidence pointing to the urgent need to support educators to deliver effective and equitable learning experiences. For example, 43 percent of superintendents responded in a recent survey that they currently lack adequate instructional capacity for online learning, including teacher proficiency. Also, a recent op-ed in TIME, authored by Senator Tammy Baldwin and Representative Ro Khanna, included comments from educators in Wisconsin and California about the impact of local budget cuts that they are facing on professional development opportunities. Most recently, a group of nearly 200 education researchers came together to recommend that schools provide teachers with the training they need to provide quality online learning environments.

Therefore, members of the COVID-19 Education Coalition urge members of Congress to work to improve the HEALS Act by adding funding for K-12 school education relief as well as specific funding to support professional development in online learning. To that end, the COVID-19 Education Coalition encourages Congress to incorporate in the final version of the HEALS Act provisions and funding levels contained in the Coronavirus Child Care and Education Relief Act (CCCERA). That bill proposes $175 billion in additional K-12 education stabilization funds, 20 percent of which must be set aside by school districts to address students’ learning loss, including “providing professional development to educators and other staff on how to effectively implement distance learning.” The CCCERA would provide funds critical to providing effective and equitable instruction for all students as school buildings remain closed.

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About the COVID-19 Education Coalition

The COVID-19 Education Coalition is a community of nonprofit organizations convened by ISTE and EdSurge to support the education field as learning moves online. The coalition is creating resources focused on these areas: policy & advocacy; centering equity; connectivity; international engagement; personalized learning; social emotional learning; safety, privacy and digital citizenship; and higher education.
Members of the COVID-19 Education Coalition

American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education
American Federation of Teachers
American Student Assistance
Arizona Technology in Education Association
ASCD
Association for Educational Communications and Technology
Association for Middle Level Education
Association of Teacher Educators
Butler County Educational Service Center
CAST
Center for Black Educator Development
CK-12 Foundation
Consortium for School Networking
Digital Promise
Edcamp Foundation
Education Commission of the States
ETS
Future of Privacy Forum
Grantmakers for Education
iCivics
Illinois Digital Educators Alliance
International Society for Technology in Education
Jefferson Education Exchange
LEAP Innovations
Learning Ally
Learning Forward
LearnLaunch
National Association of Secondary School Principals
National Center for Learning Disabilities
National Council for the Social Studies
National Council of Teachers of English
National Council of Teachers of Mathematics
National Research Center for Distance Education and Technological Advancements
National Rural Education Association
National Science Teaching Association
National Summer Learning Association
National Technology Leadership Summit
New Hampshire Society for Technology in Education
Next Generation Learning Challenges
New York State Association for Computers and Technologies in Education
Phi Delta Kappan
Project Tomorrow
Quality Matters
Relay
State Educational Technology Directors Association
Society for Information Technology and Teacher Education
SHAPE America
Student Data Privacy Consortium
Teacher Education Division of the Council for Exceptional Children
Team4Tech
The Learning Accelerator
Turnaround For Children
Virginia Society for Technology in Education
Wisconsin Educational Media & Technology Association