

**THE STATE EDUCATION DEPARTMENT / THE UNIVERSITY OF THE STATE OF NEW YORK / ALBANY, NY 12234**

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The Honorable Betsy DeVos  
Secretary of Education  
U.S. Department of Education  
400 Maryland Avenue, SW  
Washington, D.C. 20202

Dear Secretary DeVos,

Thank you for taking the time to reach out to the Department to discuss the needs of New York local educational agencies as they provide continuity of learning to our preschool, elementary and secondary students during the school closures that have occurred as a result of the COVID-19 emergency. As a follow up to our conversation, I am writing to request your support as we advocate to Congress for additional federal funding to meet not only our current needs, but also anticipated needs over the summer and into the fall.

As you know, New York State, and in particular New York City, has been the epicenter of the COVID-19 pandemic in the United States. New York State's updated financial report, released on April 25, 2020, projects a \$13.3 billion deficit for the state fiscal year that began on April 1<sup>st</sup>. Our state financial plan calls for billions of dollars in reduced aid to localities spending and an across the board 10 percent reduction in agency operations expenditures. Many schools across our State, both in both rural and urban communities, have faced tremendous challenges as they have addressed the needs created by COVID-19. Since our schools are rising to address COVID-19 needs, the impact of reductions in state-

While more details will be forthcoming as the task force undertakes its work, preliminarily, we have identified the following areas where federal funding is needed to help us reopen our public, private and charter schools and special education programhools



We are anticipating an increase in the number of students classified as English Language Learners (ELLs) due to the cancellation of assessments and potential regression in English language proficiency for students who have not had regular exposure to English speaking environments during school closures. Additional school staff will be needed to provide programming to support an increased number of ELL students, and funding is needed to provide interim formative assessments for ELLs.

### Mental Health and Social-Emotional Learning

Additional funding is needed to provide social emotional learning, mental health and trauma supports for students and staff both now and when schools reopen. We need to increase the numbers of counselors and social workers per student in order to support students as they reintegrate into the school setting. Funding is needed to hire multilingual counselors or social workers to ensure that our ELL students receive effective social-emotional learning without concern for potential language barriers. In addition, funding is needed to hire additional school counselors and social workers, to provide training to school staff on how to provide these supports for students, and to provide the supports school staff will need as they grapple with their own anxiety, depression, trauma and grief.

### School Meals

Additional funding above the current federal rates of per meal reimbursement is needed to enable schools to provide children from low income/food insecure households access to safe nutritious meals, as the per meal cost is much higher than the current reimbursement rates. Moreover, additional funding is needed for potential changes in the way in which schools will need to adjust the provision of school meals, as social distancing restrictions could restrict the use of communal settings such as cafeterias.

### Meeting the Unique Needs of At-Risk and Vulnerable Students

*Students in Neglected and Delinquent Facilities:* In many instances, school staff have been prohibited from entering facilities to provide face-to-face education services and have relied on providing educational packets to students. In addition, youth leaving neglected and delinquent facilities are struggling to transition to an educational program in a timely manner due to school closures. Additional funding for educational technology, mental health/social-emotional supports, cleaning, health services and special education compensatory services is particularly critical for students in facilities.

*Homeless Students:* Educational outcomes for students identified as homeless are worse than their permanently housed peers and their peers who are economically disadvantaged. Schools offer stability and safety for children who are homeless. When schools close or move to online learning, the health, safety, and education of children and youth experiencing homelessness is jeopardized. With significant increase in the number of students experiencing homelessness. Additional funding for educational technology, mental health/social-emotional supports, and special education compensatory services is particularly critical for homeless students, who experience significant barriers to successfully engaging in remote learning.

*Migrant Children and Families:* Migrant children face unique

English language development, and education support in the home. Additional funding for educational technology,

