

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

March 1, 2021

The Honorable Ron DeSantis
Governor
The Capitol
400 S. Monroe St.
Tallahassee, FL 32399

The Honorable Wilton Simpson
President
409 The Capitol
404 South Monroe Street
Tallahassee, FL 32399

The Honorable Chris Sprowls
Speaker
Florida House of Representatives
420 The Capitol
402 South Monroe Street
Tallahassee, FL 32399


The Honorable Richard Corcoran
Education Commissioner
Office of the Commissioner
325 West Gaines Street
Tallahassee, FL 32399

RE: Urge State of Florida to Distribute K-12 Federal Emergency Aid to Public Schools and Students in Advance of American Rescue Plan

Dear Governor DeSantis, President Simpson, Commissioner Corcoran and Speaker Sprowls:

We urge you to expedite delivery of federal emergency aid that was approved by Congress in December 2020 to local school districts to benefit public schools and students. We have worked in Congress to provide much-needed emergency aid to our local communities and schools through Coronavirus Aid, Relief and Economic Security (CARES I) Act and Coronavirus Response and Relief Supplemental Appropriations Act (CARES II). We have listened to our parents, teachers, non-instructional personnel, school board members and our school districts. All agree that students and public schools are in dire need of additional resources to operate safely, address student academic achievement, and keep teachers and other essential personnel on the job.

The CARES I Act, approved by Congress last March, provided over \$770 million to Florida and school districts for K-12 education. CARES II subsequently provided \$3.1 billion at the end of December 2020. It is critical that these emergency funds be disbursed right away to ensure continuity of student learning, and avoid layoffs and other detrimental consequences. Time is of the essence as school districts are trying to determine plans for graduation ceremonies, summer school, rapid COVID-19 testing, social workers to help bring children back to school, and other critical issues.

 COVID-19 RELIEF FOR K-12 SCHOOLS			
RELIEF ESTIMATES	CARES Act March 2020	COVID RELIEF PACKAGE December 2020	AMERICAN RESCUE PLAN Likely enactment in early March
NATIONWIDE TOTAL	\$13.2 billion	\$54 billion	\$130 billion
FLORIDA	\$770 million	\$3.1 billion	\$7.4 billion
BREVARD COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS	\$17.4 million	\$64.2 million	\$141.5 million
BROWARD COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS	\$62 million	\$257 million	\$618.1 million
DUVAL COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS	\$35.3 million	\$144 million	\$346.7 million
HILLSBOROUGH COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS	\$54.7 million	\$222 million	\$526.9 million
LEE COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS	\$21.8 million	\$106 million	\$185.3 million
LEON COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS	\$7 million	\$37 million	\$76.6 million
MIAMI-DADE COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS	\$119.2 million	\$470.2 million	\$1.1 billion
ORANGE COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS	\$55.4 million	\$246 million	\$591.9 million
PALM BEACH COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS	\$39.9 million	\$173.3 million	\$420.3 million
PINELLAS COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS	\$23.7 million	\$85.2 million	\$187.6 million
POLK COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS	\$30.7 million	\$128.3 million	\$308.7 million

The impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic and the delays in receiving federal emergency aid have created budget pressures on all Florida school districts. Florida schools are facing extensive unexpected costs as a direct result of the public health crisis. Across the state of Florida, school districts are contemplating how to address learning losses, and some are considering drastic cuts that would prove harmful to our students and state in the long run. Withholding federal emergency aid likely will increase the negative impact on our school districts, eventually costing taxpayers more money or leading to additional budget harm.

Importantly, Congress intended these emergency funds to be available to support employment of existing staff so that public school districts across Florida can keep teachers and other personnel on the job until we return to normal and all students return to the classroom. CARES I *and* CARES II funds may be used to pay employees and contractors during the disruptions caused by COVID-19. Under section 18003(d)(12) of the CARES I and section 313(d)(15) of CARES II, funds can be used for activities that are necessary to maintain the operation of and continuity of services, including continuing to employ existing staff, consistent with the organization’s policies and procedures for paying compensation from all funding sources, Federal and non-Federal. Also, section 18006 of the CARES I and section 315 of CARES II requires that local and state educational agencies, institutions of higher education or other entities receiving Education Stabilization Funds “shall, to the greatest extent practicable, continue to pay its employees and contractors during the periods of any disruption or closures replated to coronavirus.”

To hasten the delivery of emergency aid to local school districts, Congress explicitly required the U.S. Department of Education to disburse these dollars within 30 days of the

enactment of CARES II. We have been advised that the Department of Education made the ESSER II funds available to Florida on January 6, 2021. The Congressional intent and the needs of our students underscore that CARES II is to directly and immediately meet the needs of our students and families during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Furthermore, Congress passed the American Rescue Plan last week that will provide significant *additional* emergency aid for students and schools. The American Rescue Plan also will provide robust new funding under the Child Care and Development Block Grant and Head Start that will help school districts realize their plans for expanded pre-K and early pre-K. Our communities across Florida should plan now for how they will use these vital early learning funds that are critical to ensure children from birth to age five are ready for school and success in K-12, college, career and life.

Federal emergency aid is intended to support our students and educators immediately without unnecessary bureaucratic hurdles. Therefore, we urge you to expedite the transfer of federal emergency education funds to our local school districts, put the needs of our families and students first, and work with us on the next round of emergency aid.

Sincerely,



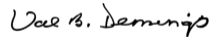
Kathy Castor
Member of Congress



Lois Frankel
Member of Congress



Frederica S. Wilson
Member of Congress



Val Butler Demings
Member of Congress



Al Lawson, Jr.
Member of Congress



Darren Soto
Member of Congress



Stephanie Murphy
Member of Congress



Ted Deutch
Member of Congress



Alcee L. Hastings
Member of Congress



Debbie Wasserman Schultz
Member of Congress



Charlie Crist
Member of Congress