

May 7, 2020

Hon. Ron DeSantis
Governor
400 S Monroe St.
Tallahassee, FL 32399
Via email:
GovernorRon.Desantis@eog.myflorida.com

Richard Corcoran
Commissioner of Education
325 West Gaines Street
Tallahassee, Florida 32399
Via email: Commissioner@fldoe.org

Dear Governor DeSantis and Commissioner Corcoran:

The over 20 undersigned organizations, representing diverse members including students, educators, families, and advocates from communities across our state, write to urge you to ensure that Florida's share of federal funds for education relief during the COVID-19 pandemic is focused on students who are impacted the most by this crisis.

We know this crisis presents many challenges for educators and schools across our state, and we appreciate the work you are doing to ensure the health and safety of students during this difficult time. This moment has also made clear the importance of our public schools in not just teaching and learning, but also in making sure students have access to food, physical and mental health supports, and robust enrichment opportunities. As so many students and families are struggling to access education and essential services, we urge you to use the significant funds from the federal Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act proactively to ensure

children and families who are disproportionately impacted. **We urge you to engage with families, students, educators, and communities across the state in how these funds are used, and to take all needed steps to ensure that these new federal resources advance equity for students, including by:**

Requiring LEAs to put equity at the center of LEA plans for the use of these new federal funds.

This can be accomplished through the State requiring LEA plans to:

1. Demonstrate, with specificity, how the LEA plan is targeting the new federal financial resources to the schools with the highest proportion of students who are low-income children, children of color, children with disabilities, English-language learner children, children in immigrant families, children in foster care, migrant children, children experiencing homelessness, LGBTQ children, children in alternative schools

open, including working with districts to ensure that students who rely on school meals continue to receive them, to coordinate supports and compensatory services for students with disabilities, and to ensure students have technology, mental health supports, and other services;

2. Gathering and sharing informational resources on effective strategies for reducing education inequities and addressing learning loss during the COVID-19 school closure, over the summer, and once schools re-open; and
3. Providing training for district and school leadership and for educators on effective strategies for reducing education inequities and addressing learning loss during the COVID-19 school closure, over the summer, and once schools re-open.

The State also should apply for additional months of emergency allotments from the USDA's Food and Nutrition Service (FNS). This would come at no cost to the State and would help ensure that SNAP benefits continue to reach communities.

Throughout all of the above federally-funded activities, the State must ensure that students most impacted during this crisis are prioritized for instructional and socio-emotional support and opportunities, which includes through:

1. McKinney-Vento program services for homeless children,
2. education services under Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act for children with disabilities,
3. addressing the technology gap for low-income children and children of color, educational materials and resources in the child's/family's native language,
4. meaningful and substantive education for children in detention,
5. and ensuring students receive needed health and mental health services.

We are ready to work with you to see that the needs of Florida's

League of United Latin American Citizens of Florida
New Florida Majority
NAACP Florida State Conference
Pastors for Children
Pastors for Florida Children
Power U Center for Social Change
SOUL Sisters Leadership Collective
SPLC Action Fund
United We Dream