

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

April 8, 2020

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

Dear Secretary DeVos:

As the country continues to grapple with the consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic, we write to encourage your swift, thoughtful, and transparent implementation of the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act. In particular, we ask for your support in ensuring that our nation's higher education institutions—many of which are actively conducting the research, education, and health care missions necessary to respond to this pandemic—receive the support they require to continue serving in this capacity from the U.S. Department of Education (Department) as soon as possible.

In implementing the CARES Act, we urge the Department to provide regulatory flexibility to officials and institutions charged with disbursing and allocating funding derived from the legislation. In calculating the amounts to be distributed to institutions, we encourage the Department to clarify the formula methodology used to disburse the funding and take into account the dramatic shift in financial resources that remain available to institutions and families in the wake of this pandemic.

Further, if not already otherwise permitted, we encourage the Department to allow institutions to augment student expense budgets to account for increased technology expenses required to complete remote education.

Some institutions may not have the capacity to enroll all students in a sufficient number of core courses to sustain the 12 credit hour minimum for federal aid, especially due to staff contract interruptions and enrollment changes during the pandemic, and we encourage the Department to provide students with the flexibility required for students to continue to be eligible for federal aid.

We also seek further clarification of the Department's intent in setting allowable uses for CARES Act funds, the timeline for distribution of those funds, and seek clarity on whether the Department will:

- Limit which students are eligible to receive emergency grants, which could harm certain students,
- Permit the use of emergency grants to reduce students' loan indebtedness, which could be helpful or necessary for some students,

- Limit direct support to undergraduate students, or also permit graduate students who are deserving and in need to receive relief,
- Limit relief to students who are Title IV eligible, which would unfairly exclude students based on immigration status, and
- Permit funding to be used until exhausted, or require funds to be expended by a certain date.

A number of institutions took immediate action to support students on their campuses, including providing emergency grants and loans for pandemic-related expenditures, and are deserving of timely support. We sincerely appreciate the Department's work to address these questions and concerns, especially in this time of great need and uncertainty.

Sincerely,



Jimmy Panetta
Member of Congress



Mike Levin
Member of Congress

/s/
Alan Lowenthal
Member of Congress

/s/
Jim Cooper
Member of Congress

/s/
Doris Matsui
Member of Congress

/s/
Jesús G. "Chuy" García
Member of Congress

/s/
Chris Pappas
Member of Congress

/s/
Karen Bass
Member of Congress

/s/
André Carson
Member of Congress

/s/
Debbie Dingell
Member of Congress

/s/
Rashida Tlaib
Member of Congress

/s/
Elissa Slotkin
Member of Congress

/s/
Grace F. Napolitano
Member of Congress

/s/
John Garamendi
Member of Congress

/s/
Juan Vargas
Member of Congress

/s/
Marcy Kaptur
Member of Congress

/s/
Daniel T. Kildee
Member of Congress

/s/
Ted W. Lieu
Member of Congress

/s/
Pramila Jayapal
Member of Congress

/s/
Scott H. Peters
Member of Congress

/s/
Suzan K. DelBene
Member of Congress

/s/
Mike Thompson
Member of Congress

/s/
Jahana Hayes
Member of Congress

/s/
Judy Chu
Member of Congress

/s/
Brenda L. Lawrence
Member of Congress

/s/
Cindy Axne
Member of Congress

/s/
Linda T. Sánchez
Member of Congress

/s/
Julia Brownley
Member of Congress

/s/
Susan A. Davis
Member of Congress

/s/
Steve Cohen
Member of Congress

/s/
Eric Swalwell
Member of Congress

/s/
Katie Porter
Member of Congress

/s/
Adam B. Schiff
Member of Congress

/s/
Donna E. Shalala
Member of Congress

/s/
Lisa Blunt Rochester
Member of Congress

/s/
Debbie Mucarsel-Powell
Member of Congress

/s/
Adam Smith
Member of Congress

/s/
Thomas R. Suozzi
Member of Congress

/s/
Jared Huffman
Member of Congress

/s/
Dave Loebsack
Member of Congress

/s/
Sheila Jackson Lee
Member of Congress

/s/
Ro Khanna
Member of Congress

/s/

Susan W. Brooks
Member of Congress

/s/

John Yarmuth
Member of Congress

/s/

Marcia L. Fudge
Member of Congress

/s/

Darren Soto
Member of Congress

/s/

Jan Schakowsky
Member of Congress

/s/

Zoe Lofgren
Member of Congress

/s/

Barbara Lee
Member of Congress

/s/

Jackie Speier
Member of Congress

/s/

Lucille Roybal-Allard
Member of Congress