



A Union of Professionals

Tell the Senate:
Don't Forfeit Our Future; We Need Federal Aid to States, Communities and Schools to Protect Essential Services and Reopen the Economy

Our states, communities and public schools continue to anchor America's response to the COVID-19 pandemic by keeping communities safe, limiting the spread of the virus and supporting our children. The Senate must act now to fund these essential services that are at the heart of our recovery and our ability to reopen our economy. Eighty-four percent of Americans support increased federal aid to protect healthcare, education, safety and other services and keep the frontline workers on the job. Mitch McConnell and President Trump have handed trillions to big corporations and the rich, but they continue to turn their backs on the needs of working people and our communities. We can't afford to forfeit our future. The U.S. Senate must act; it must match the investments passed by the House of Representatives in the HEROES Act, including:

- **Maintain critical state and local services, such as law enforcement, education and healthcare, with \$500 billion directed to state services and \$375 billion for our cities and towns.** This will allow states and communities to provide vital services, fight the coronavirus and help reopen our economy, as we come out of this health and economic crisis. Federal support to states and communities is essential for maintaining the public services that communities depend on, including public safety, healthcare, public schools and sanitation. Without this assistance there will be massive cuts in critical services and layoffs of millions of workers, many of whom are on the frontlines and essential to fighting the pandemic. Functioning public services such as healthcare and transportation will make it possible to reopen our economy safely, help businesses and get people back to work. These frontline workers have been there for us, and we need to be there for them as we recover from the coronavirus and the impacts of this economic crash. We can't solve either problem without them.
- **Ensure our K-12 public schools and public colleges and universities can reopen safely and support our children's academic, social and emotional needs with at least \$100 billion in direct aid.** In order to reopen our society and our economy—and in order for America's workers to return to their jobs—schools must be open. And the costs of safely reopening public schools and colleges in the absence of a vaccine are significant. Everything—including stairwells, banisters, keyboards and tablets—must be disinfected every day. Schools will need to retrofit classrooms to distance student seating, reconfigure schedules, run extra bus routes, and provide masks to students and staff. Districts will have to hire more school nurses, psychologists and support staff for students, many of whom will be suffering from COVID-19-related trauma, and more substitutes will have to be hired if teachers or school employees need to stay home. The cost of distance learning, including training, hardware, Wi-Fi connections and technology, will be considerable.
- **Expand health services to affected Americans through Medicaid.** The impacts of COVID-19 have exposed deep vulnerabilities in our system, including the risks we all face and the

The **American Federation of Teachers** is a union of professionals that champions fairness; democracy; economic opportunity; and high-quality public education, healthcare and public services for our students, their families and our communities. We are committed to advancing these principles through community engagement, organizing, collective bargaining and political activism, and especially through the work our members do.

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threats to our recovery if we fail to provide health services to people. By increasing Federal Medical Assistance Percentage payments to state Medicaid programs by a total of 14 percentage points starting July 1, 2020, states will be able to provide health services to the most vulnerable, including covering health services provided by schools. It will also help address the needs of Americans who have lost their jobs and employer-sponsored health insurance due to COVID-19.

- **Protect the healthcare needs and safety of healthcare workers.** To prepare for another surge of the pandemic and prevent another economic shutdown, we must boost support for testing and contact tracing to effectively monitor and suppress COVID-19. By earmarking \$175 billion for the Public Health and Social Services Emergency Fund, we can fund these services and help the many families crushed with healthcare-related expenses or lost revenue attributable to the coronavirus. At the same time, we need to ensure that those on the frontlines of the pandemic have the necessary personal protective equipment to stay safe, and the Occupational Safety and Health Administration needs to issue an emergency temporary standard to protect healthcare and other workers at occupational risk of exposure to COVID-19.