



School Administrators Alliance

Representing the Interests of Wisconsin School Children

July 22, 2020

Senator Ron Johnson
328 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Johnson:

On behalf of the Wisconsin School Administrators Alliance (SAA) and the more than 4,700 public school superintendents, business officials, principals and associate principals, personnel directors and special education directors we represent throughout Wisconsin, I write today to urge your support of a federal COVID-19 relief package that includes an additional \$200 billion investment in our nation's K-12 public schools.

We have greatly appreciated the support of the federal government in ensuring available resources to respond to the pandemic this spring and summer. In Wisconsin, about \$174 million in CARES Act funding helped schools to address immediate emergency learning needs such as school staffing, student meal programs, electronic devices and hotspots, internet connectivity and many other goods and services necessary for remote teaching and learning. However, as we look ahead to the challenges of reopening our schools this fall and to looming state revenue shortfalls, we again urge you to support additional investment in K-12 schools.

Wisconsin school leaders are hard at work planning and preparing for the re-opening of our schools. Despite significant uncertainty surrounding school re-opening, one thing is abundantly clear: The costs for school districts to open as safely and as effectively as possible will be significant. The logistics and considerations are staggering. Transportation, providing personal protective equipment (PPE) for staff and students, innovative scheduling and staffing, facility preparedness, sanitation, and regular deep cleaning are just some of the unbudgeted issues that must be addressed effectively in order to re-open schools.

The COVID-19 school closures this past spring clearly exposed inequities in our state education system, exacerbating the learning gaps that already existed for many children in many school districts throughout Wisconsin. The growing needs of our children significantly outpace available state and local revenues. A bold federal response is necessary for our kids.

Building off the financial support of the CARES Act, the next COVID-19 relief package should include a \$200 billion investment for K-12 stabilization funds to help bolster state and local budgets, support an effective school re-opening that is as safe as possible, and ensure students receive high-quality instruction and services to support their social, emotional and mental health needs. This relief package should also include \$4 billion for the E-Rate program to address a growing "homework gap" experienced by students living in poverty and those in rural

communities who can't access remote learning opportunities. Even before the school closures, these students faced significant learning challenges because of broadband accessibility issues at home.

Thank you for your consideration of our views. If you should have any questions or require additional information, please call me at (608)235-2757. We would welcome the opportunity to discuss the challenges facing school leaders in this uncertain environment, as well as potential policy responses.

Sincerely,

John D. Forester
Executive Director

JF:bh

cc: Jim Lynch, Executive Director – AWSA
Gary Myrah, Executive Director – WCASS
Mike Barry, Executive Director – WASBO
Jon Bales, Executive Director – WASDA
Vickie Adkins, Executive Director – WASPA

The SAA is an alliance of the Association of Wisconsin School Administrators (AWSA), Wisconsin Association of School Business Officials (WASBO), Wisconsin Association of School District Administrators (WASDA), Wisconsin Association of School Personnel Administrators (WASPA), and Wisconsin Council of Administrators of Special Services (WCASS). It advocates on behalf of school leaders in their efforts to strengthen Wisconsin's national leadership in education to ensure that the state's children receive the highest-quality education possible.