



Senator Markey
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

July 23, 2020

Dear Senator Markey:

America's public schools and school districts are making decisions about how to offer instruction (in-person, virtual, or a combination of both) for the new school year. As a constituent and a school nurse, I ask that you support robust federal funding with maximum flexibility for school districts and schools to prioritize the health and safety of their students and staff when resuming in-person and virtual learning for the new school year.

In a June 2020 Massachusetts School Nurse Organization (MSNO) survey, nearly 6% of school nurses reported their jobs were eliminated or furloughed due to the economic impact of the COVID-19 pandemic (n=788). MA School Nurses have contributed to flattening the curve in our state by providing assistance to students and their families and conducting contact tracing with local health departments. In a time when MA schools are preparing for the return of our students, at least 47 MA School Nurse positions have been affected. This represents a major loss to students' health, safety and readiness to learn.

Many students are facing new or increased social, emotional, and mental health challenges due to the uncertainty, grief, and fear brought by the COVID-19 pandemic. The return to school itself may create fear and anxiety for students, families, and staff that will need to be addressed. For students living in or near poverty, school nurses, school psychologists, school counselors, school social workers, and school-based health centers offer the only means for access to regular health care, mental and behavioral healthcare, and other supportive care services. Federal investments are critical to ensure that districts are able to retain existing staff and avoid laying off these desperately needed professionals.

Decisions to resume in-person education in public school buildings mean school districts must plan and implement coordinated infectious disease prevention and intervention, as well as plan for short-term and long-term school closures. Well-developed pandemic plans that implement public health protocols will include screening for symptoms of disease, isolating students and staff who become ill during the school day, implementing effective sanitation, collaborating with state and local public health authorities for best practices in infectious disease control, and providing essential personal protective equipment and training for its use by school staff. Plans must also include considerations for implementing hygiene

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practices on school transportation for public school students - another costly investment for schools and school districts, as well as for students who use public transportation to get to schools.

A safer return to in-person teaching in public schools requires robust federal funding - at a minimum \$208 billion - with maximum flexibility for school districts and schools to prioritize investments that will enable environments where students are able to learn, and students and staff are healthy and safe. These funds are necessary whether schooling is in-person, remote, or a hybrid of these approaches, and must not be contingent on face-to-face instruction. We ask the Senate to make that investment for the children and youth in America's public schools.

Sincerely,

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