June 25, 2020

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
Majority Leader
U.S. Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Chuck Schumer
Minority Leader
U.S. Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
Speaker of the House
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Kevin McCarthy
Minority Leader
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Speaker Pelosi, Senate Majority Leader McConnell, Minority Leader Schumer, and House Minority Leader McCarthy:

Thank you for your leadership during the COVID-19 pandemic and for the K-12 education provisions included in the CARES Act, particularly the discretionary funding for governors and the inclusion of equitable services for private school teachers and students in the recovery. As Congress works on the next phase of education aid, we, the undersigned, write to express our strong support for language that would ensure all students receive education support, regardless of where they attend school.

For millions of K-12 students, the pandemic has led to an unprecedented interruption of critical classroom instruction time, educational programs, and services. Many of these students have fallen behind or will not be prepared to advance to the next grade. When governors took swift action to close schools at the onset of the pandemic, they treated public and private schools and their students equally by closing all schools. We believe it is essential for the response to support students at all schools—both public and private—equally, too.

We recognize many students and families are facing acute hardship as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. This is true for students attending private schools across America, especially more than 1.7 million students from lower income families who are now facing additional economic uncertainty and potential instability in their children’s education. With many families suddenly facing unexpected and immense financial challenges with income loss, they may not be able to make required tuition payments. Those hardest hit by economic uncertainty and income loss are typically the most vulnerable—namely the poor and minority communities. We believe that
families seeking the best education opportunities for their children, especially those facing difficulties due to COVID19, should be supported.

Additionally, many private schools support their economically diverse student body through private philanthropy, which is also in jeopardy due to the economic downturn from COVID-19. We believe public and private school students must be given the resources for success, particularly students in need.

Private school closures would be devastating for families, students and communities. It will be equally devastating, financially, for public school districts. A strategic federal investment will help prevent a flood of students from private schools into districts that are already projecting major budget shortfalls. States and districts will face an unbearable financial burden if current private school students transfer into public schools in significant numbers. If private schools are shuttered because families are not paying tuition for an extended period of time, the increase of public education expenditures for millions of new students coming back into the district systems will be staggering. Should 20 percent of private school students have to be reabsorbed into the public system, it will cost the public system roughly $15 billion. We believe students should be supported in the education environment that is the best fit and causes the least disruption to their learning.

Further, migration of students from private schools to over-crowded public schools will not only cost more money but will directly impact any re-opening of public schools and their capacity to maintain social distancing. Such a prospect is all the more ominous given the higher than average spread of the contagion in minority communities.

In response to these concerns, we submit the following ideas for inclusion in the next COVID-19 relief package:

**Emergency Appropriation** – Appropriate a one-time emergency tuition grant for low to middle-income private school families.

**Federal Tax Credits for Scholarship Funds** – Create an annual federal tax credit for voluntary donations to state-based scholarship granting organizations and workforce training organizations. The scholarships could be used by families for an array of educational options, including private school tuition, skilled trade union apprenticeship programs, and industry recognized certification programs. The grant amount, per state, could be tied to ESEA Title IIA calculations. States receiving these emergency grants
would continue the scholarship programs, funded through philanthropy and the federal tax credit, going forward.

These initiatives could be funded by setting aside 10 percent of any new federal COVID-19 relief funding provided to public schools. This percentage would be consistent with the overall population of private vs. public students in the country. Also, with continued uncertainty ahead, it is important to pair any one-time direct aid with a comprehensive, sustainable tax credit to sustain scholarships for children long term. **We believe it is important for families to receive education support and funding from these proposals.**

We all believe that *all of our nation’s children* deserve access to a quality education. As the country responds to COVID-19 and prepares for the 2020-21 school year, we look forward to working with you to preserve and strengthen educational opportunities for all students.

Sincerely,

Agudath Israel of America  
American Association of Christian Schools  
American Federation for Children  
Association of Christian Schools International (ACSI)  
Catholic Education Partners  
Center for Education Reform  
Center for Free Economy  
Council for American Private Education (CAPE)  
Cristo Rey National Network  
Ed Choice  
#EdTaxCredit50  
Invest in Education Coalition  
Jesuit School Network  
Leadership Roundtable  
Men and Women for a Representative Democracy in America  
National Catholic Education Association (NCEA)  
Phyllis Schlafly Eagles  
Ready Education Network  
The Catholic Association  
Thomas B. Fordham Institute  
Tradition, Family, Property, Inc.  
U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, Committee on Catholic Education
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IL Big Shoulders Fund
IL Empower Illinois
IN Indiana Non-Public Education Association
IN Institute for Quality Education (IQE)
IN Lutheran Scholarship Granting Organization of Indiana
KS ACE Scholarships - Kansas City
KY Bluegrass Institute for Public Policy Solutions
LA ACE Scholarships - Louisiana
LA Arete Scholars
LA Aspiring Scholars
MA Archdiocese of Boston
MA Campaign For Catholic Schools
MA CSF/ Inner-City Scholarship Fund
MA Lynch Foundation
MA The Catholic Foundation of Southeastern MA
MD Children's Scholarship Fund Baltimore
MI Mackinac Center for Public Policy
MN Catholic Community Foundation
MN Catholic School Center For Excellence
MN Center of the American Experiment
MN Freedom Foundation of Minnesota
MN Minnesota Independent School Forum
MN Opportunity For All Kids
MO Children's Education Alliance of Missouri
MO Today and Tomorrow Foundation
MS Mississippi Center for Public Policy
MT ACE Scholarships - Montana
NC Civitas Institute
NC John Locke Foundation
NC Parents for Educational Freedom in North Carolina
ND Roughrider Policy Center
NE Children's Scholarship Fund of Omaha
NH Children's Scholarship Fund New Hampshire
NJ Catholic Partnership Schools
NJ Diocese of Paterson
NJ Healy Educational Fund
NJ Tri-County Scholarship Fund
NJ Archdiocese of Newark
AAA Scholarship Foundation
Dinosaurs & Roses Scholarship Organization
Education Nevada Of Northern Nevada (EFNN)
IPOF Las Vegas
Nevada Policy Research Institute
Archdiocese of New York
BISON Children’s Scholarship Fund
Children’s Scholarship Fund
Cornelia Connelly Center
Dominican Academy
New York State Association of Independent Schools
NYCAN
Partnership for Inner-City Education
Regis High School
Saint Ignatius School
The Loyola School
Partnership for Inner-City Education
Howley Foundation
Northwest Ohio Scholarship Fund
School Choice Ohio
Crossover Scholarship Fund
Go for Catholic Schools
Opportunity Scholarship Fund Oklahoma
Tax Credit Scholarship Program of the Archdiocese of Oklahoma City
The Academy Scholarship Granting Organization
Children’s Scholarship Fund Oregon
ACE Scholarship - Philadelphia
ACSI Children’s Education Fund (ACEF)
Business Leadership Organized for Catholic Schools (BLOCS)
Children’s Scholarship Fund of Philadelphia
Commonwealth Foundation
Diocese of Scranton Scholarship Foundation
Eastern Pennsylvania Scholarship Foundation-Diocese of Allentown
Faith In The Future
Foundation for Catholic Education-Archdiocese of Philadelphia
Independent Mission Schools
Scholarship Partners Foundation-Diocese of Greensburg
Second Century Scholarship Fund-Diocese of Altoona-Johnstown
STAR Foundation scholarship Fund-Diocese of Erie
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