

August 4, 2020



## **URGENT ED POLICY CHANGES NEEDED** RE: Policy Recommendations for the New Normal

**We are at a critical moment for education in our country.** We have watched over the past week as school districts continue to struggle with critical decisions as to whether they should open schools, union threats about national strikes, and parents from all walks of life taking their children's education into their own hands like never before.

As you debate the Health, Economic Assistance, Liability Protection, and Schools Act (HEALS Act) a key point is very disturbing. It's been more than four months since the President signed the CARES Act, which delivered almost \$31 billion in education assistance. **But so far, of the \$13 billion the Education Department laid out in an emergency relief fund for K-12 schools, only 2 percent has been drawn down.** Schools and districts, some public, some charter and some private that are reopening with various options for families in every state have yet to receive the money they need to continue. **And unions are attacking states and locales that are trying to provide options for everyone, while demanding billions more.**

**These actions cannot be the new normal in the United States.** How do you demand more money when your intention is not to return to work in person and are working to restrict even active, synchronous online education? There must be a better path. There is a better path.

**CER has laid out some straightforward policy suggestions for Congressional leaders who still believe in accountability for taxpayer funds and an education structure that delivers a future for all Americans.**



## It is time for a new *Four Freedoms* to drive a new national education policy agenda.

1. **Freedom for parents** to use their tax dollars on the best educational option for their child whether it's a charter, private, virtual or home/pod schooling.
2. **Freedom for taxpayers** to ensure their hard-earned money is being spent on schools and innovative approaches that offer effective solutions to the current crisis.
3. **Freedom for teachers** who want to work and should not be held captive by union leaders who are only interested in strikes not solutions.
4. **Freedom for charter, private and other forms of school** from union-controlled politicians and regulations to continue to find innovative ways to address the needs of the millions of children who will continue to fall further behind as learning stops.

We submit these policy recommendations with the fervent hope that Congress takes bold steps to **DEMAND A NEW NORMAL**.

### Policy Recommendations for Federal Action:

#### Tie new federal stimulus funding to universal education delivery

- Allocate 10% of the \$70 billion focused on elementary, middle and high grade levels to private schools;
- Distribute funds to schools **only** if they can offer effective, proven online and on-ground solutions to every parent. No comprehensive online/on-ground plan no funds.
- Districts should utilize one of the hundreds of exceptional programs or providers able to deliver education digitally, virtually, personalized or blended.
- Fully support the inclusion of the Emergency Education Freedom Grants

#### Require funds to follow the child

- School districts or individual LEAs that do not meet parents' needs should pay the provider of the parent/taxpayers choice to deliver education. That should include microschools, private tutors and the new "Pandemic Pods."
- Public schools contract with private and other public entities all the time for special education, transportation, curriculum, etc. Contracts could be made between any school district/LEA and a service provider.

#### Open up the teaching profession to interested, qualified people

- Many teachers are concerned about going back or teaching remotely. We must incentivize individuals who want and can teach and are highly qualified in their field to work in schools for commensurate pay.
- States should be permitted to spend federal education funds during Covid to support schools directly that seek to hire new and different kinds of teachers during this crisis, and perhaps, beyond.
- Requirements for certification should be suspended during this pandemic, and federal restrictions on funds that only support existing teacher requirements temporarily suspended.