

Dear Secretary Cardona and Director Rice:

Thank you for your continued leadership to support the needs of students and schools, especially those made most marginalized and vulnerable by our current systems. As the Biden-Harris Administration prepares the fiscal year 2023 (FY23) budget proposal, we – the undersigned civil rights, education, and immigration organizations – write to ask that you ensure your emphasis on educational equity is reflected in the budget proposal.

We appreciate the Biden-Harris Administration’s commitment to securing additional resources to address the significant impacts of COVID-19, including through the American Rescue Plan Act (ARP). The COVID-19 pandemic laid bare the long-standing systemic inequities within our school systems that result in racial, social, and economic inequalities, all of which have only been further exacerbated by the pandemic. Although they have experienced multiple disruptions and traumas – including online or hybrid learning models, the lack of consistent peer and school staff relationships, the loss of loved ones, and the overarching sense of uncertainty of what the future holds – students and their families have demonstrated incredible levels of resiliency in the face of this crisis. Their resilience, however, cannot belie the reality that they need and deserve additional support, especially for students who must contend with the dual crises of the pandemic and systemic oppression.

Students living in poverty, students with disabilities, students learning English, students experiencing homelessness, students in the foster care system, students who are incarcerated, students who are undocumented, Black and Brown students, Native students, and students who identify as LGBTQ+ have all faced, and will continue to experience, disproportionate challenges that impede their learning during the pandemic and in the future as we recover. This disproportionality is evident across many adverse experiences that disrupt learning. As a result, many students have navigated challenges on multiple fronts and face significant barriers to thriving in school. Food insecurity, unreliable access to remote learning technology, reduced access to student supports and education services, and homelessness as the result of familial unemployment and stress are just some of the elements that have played a role in disrupting and diminishing vulnerable students’ learning opportunities and growth. Further, racial inequities highlighted by both COVID-19 and ongoing racial violence against Black Americans cause additional stress and anxiety for students of color and expose some of the additional daily challenges they face.

The pandemic will have a long-term effect on student learning, outcomes, and experiences, and it is important that we make investments that will advance racial, economic, and educational equity. To that end, we urge you to include the following in the Administration’s FY23 budget proposal:

**Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) Programs:**

- **Triple funding for Title I, Part A.** As a part of this request, we encourage the Administration to:
  - Target Title I funds toward the highest poverty school districts. We recommend allocating the funding through the Targeted Assistance Grant and Education Finance Incentive Grant (EFIG) formulas or another formula that is more targeted toward high poverty districts, and allocates at least as great a percentage of funds to school districts in the top two quintiles of poverty nationally;
  - Provide new incentives for greater resource equity at the state and local levels as a condition for eligibility for increased funds; and
  - Maintain the flexibility of Title I and refrain from requiring specific uses of funds.

- **A 10 percent reservation of Title I, Part A funding for evidence-based school improvement activities** required under section 1003(a) of ESEA. This will help to ensure there are sufficient resources to address the increased needs of districts and schools serving students most impacted by the pandemic as states use their accountability systems to identify new schools, including those identified for Targeted Supported and Improvement (TSI) based on individual groups of students, for additional support.
- **\$2.5 billion in Title II, Part A** to support teacher professional development, including support for high-quality induction and mentorship and training in culturally responsive instruction, social and emotional development, restorative justice, and trauma-informed instructional practices.
- **\$400 million to support teacher leadership opportunities** through opportunities such as high-quality mentorship and coaching programs.
- **\$200 million for a School Leadership Recruitment and Support Program** to grow student access to well-prepared and diverse school leaders. This funding should be in addition to any mandatory funding that may be provided through the Build Back Better Act.
- **\$300 million to provide financial support for teachers pursuing in-demand credentials** in shortage areas, like special education and bilingual education, advanced certification like National Board Certification, and incentives for teachers with in-demand and advanced credentials to remain in the classroom.
- **\$2 billion for Title III** to ensure that funding reflects the growing number of English learners, supports parent engagement programs and resources in their home language, supports effective dual language learning models and opportunities to strengthen the pre-service preparation, professional learning, and advancement of bilingual teachers.
- **\$4.9 billion for Title IV programs, including:**
  - **\$2 billion in Title IV, Part A funding** for the breadth of mental, physical, social, and emotional student supports and services, such as funding for school counselors, social workers, nurses, and nutrition programs.
  - **\$1.4 billion in Title IV, Part B funding** to support 21st Century Community Learning Centers, which offer robust afterschool and extended learning time programs.
  - **\$500 million within Title IV, Part D for the Magnet School Assistance Program.** Research shows that magnet schools support school integration and have positive academic and social outcomes for students, yet MSAP has been underfunded.
  - **\$1 billion for Title IV, Part F** for Full-Service Community Schools. Full-Service Community Schools (FSCS) encourage coordination of academic, social, and health services through partnerships among public elementary and secondary schools, LEAs, community-based organizations, nonprofit organizations, and other public or private entities.
- **\$100 billion in direct grants and \$30 billion in bonds for K-12 school facilities**, which are in [desperate need](#) of repair and upgrades. These grants should include requirements for ongoing reporting of the status of all schools in districts receiving grant funds. The Administration should establish a regular data collection of the quality of all public school buildings in tandem with the

appropriation of funds.

- **\$120 million for the Fostering Diverse Schools program, as proposed in the Administration's FY22 budget.** This program would provide planning and implementation grants to help communities foster diverse learning environments. Further, we would encourage the Administration to inform states and districts that other federal funds can be used to support school diversity efforts. This should include making entities aware of the removal of prohibitions on federal funds being used to support integration, and that Title I, Part A school improvement funds can be used to support socioeconomic and racial integration in schools as an evidence-based strategy to improve schools identified for improvement.

#### **Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) Programs:**

- **\$17.4 billion for IDEA, Part B,** which would provide a significant increase to programs and services authorized by IDEA and create a glide path for full funding.
- **\$800 million for the IDEA, Part D personnel preparation program** to support the development of our nation's special education educators.

#### **McKinney-Vento Act's Education for Homeless Children and Youth Program:**

- **\$800 million for the McKinney-Vento Act's Education for Homeless Children and Youth (EHCY) program** to increase identification of students experiencing homelessness, re-engage students, and address their academic, social, emotional learning, and basic needs. This is the same level of funding as provided in the American Rescue Plan Act and would provide for continuity of ARP HCY programming and services, particularly in LEAs that received direct funding to support students experiencing homelessness for the first time through ARP HCY. Further, the FY23 budget should maintain the flexibility in use of EHCY funds provided for in ARP HCY, allowing for wrap-around services that meet the needs of the whole child and thus facilitate attendance, enrollment, and school success.

#### **Federal Communications Commission (FCC) Programs:**

- **\$8 billion in continued funding for the Emergency Connectivity Fund as proposed in the SUCCESS Act ([S.2447/H.R.4663](#)) to address the digital divide** through E-Rate, including meeting connectivity and hardware needs to ensure all students have access to virtual learning and supporting digital literacy and multilingual technology support. Without continued funding, at least [5.4 million children](#) will lose their internet connections.

#### **Higher Education Act (HEA) Programs:**

- **\$1 billion for the Teacher Quality Partnership Grant Program** to support Grow Your Own (GYO) programs and year-long, paid teacher residency programs. This funding should be in addition to any mandatory funding that may be provided through the Build Back Better Act.
- **\$300 million in the Augustus Hawkins Centers of Excellence Program** to support comprehensive teacher preparation at programs at Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs), Tribal Colleges and Universities (TCUs), and other minority-serving institutions (MSIs). This funding should be in addition to any mandatory funding that may be provided through the Build Back Better Act.

- **Double TEACH Grants from \$4,000 to \$8,000** so that the program more effectively underwrites the cost of comprehensive preparation and lowers inequitable affordability barriers faced by students of color and students experiencing low incomes. To make the program more effective the loan conversion penalty should be removed, or reformed, and early educators should be made eligible for benefits.

#### **Data and Innovation Programs:**

- **\$350 million to bolster the State Longitudinal Data System program** so state and district leaders can address current and evolving information needs. Funds should be allocated so that 30 percent of funds provide states with funding to address immediate needs, and 70 percent of funds be used to authorize an emergency round of competitive grants for large-scale data projects.
- **\$428 million for State Assessment Grants** so that states have the resources necessary to adapt, improve, and carry out critical student assessment activities, which have been severely disrupted by the pandemic and are one necessary component of understanding how the pandemic has impacted student academic learning over the last two school years.

#### **Advancements to Funding Equity and Targeting Needs:**

- Addressing funding equity through meaningful implementation and enforcement of the American Rescue Plan Act requirements for (1) State Maintenance of Effort to ensure states do not disinvest in education; (2) State [Maintenance of Equity](#) to protect the highest-need districts from disproportionate cuts in state funding; and (3) District [Maintenance of Equity](#) to protect our most vulnerable schools from disproportionate cuts (including funding and staff);
- Closing the comparability loophole to ensure that low-income schools do not receive less funding than their more affluent counterparts and that such calculations are based on actual expenditures that include teacher salaries;
- Ensuring federal funds supplement, and do not supplant, state and local funds, and that there is a meaningful way to ensure compliance;
- Providing incentives for states to make their education spending more equitable, such as grant aid to support states transitioning to more adequate and equitable funding systems (which could include expanding and funding the current weighted student funding flexibility under ESSA); establishing State School Funding Equity Commissions to identify funding and educational opportunity equity gaps with state funding formulas, as well as examinations of similar equity gaps within local funding formulas; and initiating an annual report of K-12 education funding with state-by-state information on adequacy, effort, and equity of K-12 education funding formulas that identifies any areas of progress and includes recommendations;
- Ensuring local community members, educators, families, and students are involved in determining how funds are spent, programs are implemented, and a part of evaluation and accountability for those expenditures, including by undertaking robust monitoring and enforcement of community and stakeholder engagement provisions in existing laws such as the Every Student Succeeds Act and the American Rescue Plan.

**Resources for critical U.S. Department of Education operations:**

- Ensure that the **U.S. Department of Education has adequate dedicated funding for the agency to monitor and enforce** the critical legal protections for students accessing their education, including under McKinney-Vento’s Education for Homeless Children and Youth Program (EHCY) (particularly at the state and local liaison levels), Title I and Title III of ESEA, the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act; and to properly exercise the mission of the Office of Civil Rights.

COVID-19 has exacerbated and highlighted inequalities in our nation’s education system, and it is clear our nation is only just beginning to recover from the pandemic’s widespread impacts. We respectfully request that the Biden-Harris Administration’s FY23 budget proposal represent a continued commitment to providing the resources that students need to recover and succeed by including these investments.

Sincerely,

All4Ed

Education Reform Now

The Education Trust

Learning Policy Institute

National Center for Learning Disabilities

National Urban League

SchoolHouse Connection

Teach Plus

UnidosUS