Coronavirus Crisis Threatens Funding for Public Education

Congress needs to appropriate at least $175 billion more for the Education Stabilization Fund to distribute to states to address COVID-19's impact on students and educators from preK-12 through higher education. The CARES Act provides $30.7 billion to fill looming gaps in education funding—far short of what's needed.

▶ State and local governments are on target to suffer the worst **budget shortfall** of the century in FY2021.
  – Costs are **rising fast** as they seek to contain and treat COVID-19, respond to rapidly rising unemployment, and address related human needs.
  – At the same time, tax revenues are expected to **drop sharply** due to the widespread decline in economic activity and consumer spending on almost everything except groceries.

▶ NEA's calculation that at least $175 billion is needed to **stabilize education funding** is based on projected revenue losses in FY2020 and FY2021, historical revenue losses during the Great Recession, and more.

▶ The National Governors Association is calling for **$500 billion** in direct relief to state and local governments.

▶ The coronavirus pandemic has laid bare long-standing **inequities in educational opportunity**. As an Education Week blogger observed, "The spending disparities between rich and poor districts will only get worse …"

▶ The coronoavirus pandemic should NOT be used as an excuse to cut essential public services like education or advance bad ideas **repeatedly rejected by Congress**—among them, "microgrants" and other voucher schemes that siphon funding from public schools and undermine accountability.

▶ The **next round of COVID-19 legislation** should include funding for student supports such as nutritious meals and mental health services; funding to equip students with devices and internet access so they can do schoolwork at home; and funding to keep educators working so their students can continue learning. This list is not exhaustive—flexibility to address local needs is essential.