

Washington Update June 5, 2020

Dear Colleagues:

This has been a traumatic week in our nation coming face to face with the rampant and violent racism we all must confront and change. I am working on a blog to share about my thoughts and my actions, and that will come soon. Each of us has a role to play, especially as educators. This is the time to dig deep and step up.

1. Educators Step Up for Racial Justice

Educators are responding to the killing of George Floyd and the racism it highlights by stepping up with a variety of initiatives and a renewed sense of urgency. Both the University of Minnesota and the Minnesota Public Schools have cut their ties with the Minneapolis Police Department. The Minnesota School Board voted 9-1 to terminate the contract with the police department. This means that the 14 resources officers currently in schools will no longer be there. The School Board is working to come up with alternative plans for how to handle potential law breaking in schools.

The National Association of Secondary School Principals (NASSP) is urging school leaders to address racial disparities in discipline policies and the use of resource officers in response to the George Floyd killing and subsequent events. NASSP wrote “It calls on us to lead conversations with all students and stakeholders that will build culturally responsive schools...We echo the frustrations of peaceful protesters and the urgency for justice felt by all citizens of conscience. But we are not helpless to effect change. Far from it.”

The Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights and 400 other organizations, including both teachers’ unions, issued a letter calling on Congress to pass police reform legislation. They urge changes in areas including the use of force, policy accountability, racial profiling, militarization, data collection and training.

Many organizations have issued statements responding to the crisis, including the American Association of Colleges of Teacher Education (AACTE), the Council for Exceptional Children, the National Association of State Directors of Special Education and Learning Policy Institute (see links below.) AACTE CEO Lynn Gangone wrote:

“Collectively, we must disrupt these inequities by increasing and maintaining a diverse workforce, preventing the school-to prison pipeline, and encouraging white colleagues to align with their peers of color as allies and accomplices in speaking and acting against systemic and institutional racism. The responsibility to create change is on the shoulders of white allies. It has been on the backs of the Black community for far too long.”

<https://www.kare11.com/article/news/local/george-floyd/minneapolis-schools-sever-ties-to-mpd/89-1e71de4b-7046-4bfa-bf18-b27cd6fcfd43>

<https://abcnews.go.com/Sports/university-minnesota-cuts-ties-minneapolis-police-george-floyds/story?id=70919039>

<https://blog.nassp.org/2020/06/03/an-open-letter-to-school-leaders/>

<https://civilrights.org/2020/06/01/400-civil-rights-organizations-urge-congressional-action-on-police-violence/>

<https://edprepmatters.net/2020/06/aacte-president-and-ceo-speaks-on-the-killing-of-george-floyd-and-systemic-racism/>

<https://www.cec.sped.org/News/Message-About-Racism-and-Inequity>

http://nasdse.org/news_manager.php?page=21214

https://learningpolicyinstitute.org/blog/racial-justice-educational-equity?utm_source=LPI+Master+List&utm_campaign=1555cb4217-LPIMC_RacialJustice_20200604&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_7e60dfa1d8-1555cb4217-42314823

2. Senate Hearing: COVID-19: Going Back to College Safely

Four witnesses testified virtually to the Senate HELP Committee on Thursday addressing the re-opening of colleges and universities in the midst of the pandemic. Witnesses were:

- Mitch Daniels, President, Purdue University
- Christina Paxson, President, Brown University
- Logan Hampton, President, Lane University
- Georges Benjamin, Executive Director, American Public Health Association

Another Senate HELP Committee hearing in June 10 will consider PK-12 schools opening up in the midst of the pandemic. See link below.

For a recording of the higher education hearing:

<https://www.help.senate.gov/hearings/covid-19-going-back-to-college-safely>

Tune in to the June 10 hearing at 10 AM ET:

<https://www.help.senate.gov/hearings/covid-19-going-back-to-school-safely>

3. CARES Act Implementation Proceeds/Proposals for Next COVID-19 Relief Bill Develop

Congress is keeping an eye on the implementation of the CARES Act as it prepares to construct the next COVID-19 relief package, which was initiated by the House as it passed the HEROES Act last month. Implementation of the CARES Act has generated a number of controversies in both higher education and K-12 education. Most prominent is

Sec. DeVos's focus on expanding federal funds for private schools through guidance she released. The National Coalition for Public Education led a letter from 50 civil rights, education and disability organizations urging congressional leaders to pass legislation rescinding the guidance. In addition, they urge that any further COVID-19 relief legislation prevent such targeting of funds to private schools. Undeterred, Sec. DeVos announced she will be issuing regulations on the topic in coming weeks. Meanwhile some states are following the guidance and others are not.

Issues emerging to be addressed in the next COVID-19 package include liability waivers for higher education and businesses, waivers of maintenance of effort provisions in IDEA and increases in funds for education. The American Council on Education sent a letter urging Congress to shield institutions of higher education from liability that may arise as a result of the pandemic. This request echoes the request made by businesses as they begin to open up. This week a coalition of consumer advocacy groups pushed back arguing that such provisions would make it harder for students or workers who get sick from the virus to sue. The letter notes that "immunity from legal liability could empower the worst actors in the higher education sector to gamble with students' lives." Sen. Lamar Alexander (R-TN), chair of the Senate HELP Committee, has indicated that limiting legal liability for colleges and businesses would be a top priority in the next COVID relief bill.

Last week over 100 House Democratic lawmakers urged that the next COVID relief bill include \$305 billion for K-12 education in the state stabilization fund. The amount was based on estimates from the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities. They note that if there is a 25% reduction in state funding for schools, more than 580,000 education jobs will be eliminated. In the HEROES Act, passed by the House last month, only \$90 billion was included for education, \$58 billion of which was for local schools. One leader of the letter is Rep. Jahana Hayes (D-CT), the 2016 National Teacher of the Year. "Cuts to public education result in educator layoffs, with a disproportionate impact on students of color in low-wealth communities. It is unacceptable to mortgage the future of our children to balance budgets after a national crisis," she wrote.

A number of education organizations have weighed in urging a waiver of the IDEA maintenance of effort provision for local school districts in the next COVID relief bill. The request is supported by AASA, CASE, NASDE and others.

<https://www.politico.com/newsletters/morning-education/2020/05/26/devos-vows-new-regulation-on-relief-aid-for-private-school-students-787867>

<http://blogs.edweek.org/edweek/campaign-k-12/2020/05/special-education-idea-coronavirus-spending.html>

4. Impact of COVID-19 on the Education Workforce

A disturbing analysis from the Education Policy Institute concludes that job losses in April in education eclipse those from the great recession. The Bureau of Labor Statistics reported that, as of April, state and local government jobs fell by 981,000, with most losses in local government. Most local government losses were in education, with 468,800 jobs lost in local public school employment. Furthermore, half of the job losses in K-12 public education between March and April were among special education teachers, tutors and teaching assistants.

While school districts are losing teachers, the prospects for the preparation of new teachers appears to be shrinking as well. The American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education (AACTE) reported on a survey of its members which indicates a shrinking supply of new teachers. The survey found that 23% of respondents expect a decline in continuing education student enrollment of more than 10%. Forty percent expect such a decline in new students.

Education advocates will highlight these losses and their implications for student learning as they urge increased financial investment in education in the next COVID-19 relief bill due to be considered by the Senate in coming weeks.

EPI analysis: <https://www.epi.org/blog/public-education-job-losses-in-april-are-already-greater-than-in-all-of-the-great-recession/>

AACTE survey results: <https://edprepmatters.net/2020/05/aacte-survey-captures-members-coronavirus-experience-and-response/>

5. Congressional Schedule for Appropriations

The pandemic has thrown the congressional schedule into disarray, as it has with most everything else. The House had initially announced a goal of passing all 12 FY 2021 funding bills by the end of June. That is now modified with the new goal of passing all bills by the end of July. Subcommittee and full committee markups are expected to take place the week of July 6 with floor votes as soon as the weeks of July 20 and 27. The Senate is looking to mark up several funding bills at the end of June and the remainder after the July 4th recess. Most education observers continue to predict a Continuing Resolution come September 30 when the fiscal year ends.

6. New Resources for Educators

- 2019 National Teacher of the Year **Rodney Robinson** on *How Educators Can Turn Grief Into Action*: <https://rod robinsonrva.com/blogs/f/how-educators-can-turn-grief-into-action>
- **Inside Higher Education** reports on higher education leaders' response to the death of George Floyd and the aftermath in *Calls for Change*:

- <https://www.insidehighered.com/news/2020/06/02/higher-ed-leaders-address-protests-racial-tensions-and-killing-george-floyd>
- **Education Dive** reports *Educators Call for Schools to be ‘Safe Havens’ Against Racism*: <https://www.educationdive.com/news/educators-call-for-schools-to-be-safe-havens-against-racism/578981/>
 - **Ed Week** reports *‘Teachers Cannot be Silent’ How Educators are Showing Up for Black Students Following Protests*: http://blogs.edweek.org/teachers/teaching_now/2020/06/as_protests_erupt_after_george_floyds_death_teachers_grieve_with_students_from_a_distance.html?cmp=eml-enl-eu-news1-rm&M=59586924&U=1595124&UUID=048db4853d88ca82835a9e9198cad282
 - **McKinsey and Company** has published *With American Campuses Largely Empty of Students, Higher-Education Leaders Need to Shift Their Thinking to What Happens Next*: <https://www.mckinsey.com/industries/public-sector/our-insights/coronavirus-how-should-us-higher-education-plan-for-an-uncertain-future?cid=other-eml-alt-mip-mck&hlkid=468e0537035d4c2fa94ec516ddd4626f&hctky=2350589&hdpid=454ed0ff-00bf-4bad-9778-4855f8a0341c>
 - **The Government Accountability Office** issued a report which revealed that **Fifty-four percent of the nation’s public school districts need to update or replace critical building systems** such as outdated heating and air conditioning systems that can imperil indoor air quality for students and staff. This does not bode well for students and staff heading back to school in fall in the midst of the pandemic: <https://www.gao.gov/products/GAO-20-494#summary>

7. Opportunities for Educators

- Between June 4 and June 15, **Rowan University** is offering a series of virtual events *We are not Okay: Injustice, Action and Healing Series*. Convenings will cover topics including *Speaking Truth to Power through Pedagogy: Anti-Racist Teaching in Higher Education* and *White People Do Something: A dialogue on Whiteness and Allyship*: <https://today.rowan.edu/news/2020/06/images/rowan-series-to-address-racism,-historical-context-and-paths-forward.html>
- Please take part in the **Committee for Education Funding (CEF) Day of Advocacy on June 9, 2020**

Members of Congress care about what their constituents want, and we are asking for your help in urging Congress to increase federal education funding — investments that now are more important than ever. Federal education funding makes a real difference every day in the lives of students, teachers, families, schools and communities even before the pandemic raised education costs while slashing state and local revenue that supports education. Congress will soon be debating another emergency coronavirus relief measure and begin drafting the next year’s funding bill for education.

Please join the [Committee for Education Funding \(CEF\)](#) in holding a virtual day of advocacy on Tuesday, June 9. CEF is holding many virtual meetings with congressional offices, and **you can add your voice:**

Tell your Members of Congress to increase education funding for immediate pandemic relief costs and for the coming year.

[Click here](#) to send the following message to your Members of Congress – feel free to add a personal example of why education funding matters to you.

Email that will be sent to your Members of Congress:

“I am a constituent and am joining the Committee for Education Funding (CEF) day of advocacy to urge you to increase federal education funding in the next coronavirus relief bill and in the FY 2021 bill funding the Department of Education. The pandemic has dramatically increased the cost of education at the same time that state and local revenues and institutional resources will be cut. Investments in education are vital for students, families, communities, and the U.S. economy, yet funding for the Department of Education has barely increased for years, and regular funding is now more than \$7 billion below the 2011 level in inflation-adjusted dollars. Please work hard to increase federal support for education. Thank you.”

Take good care of yourself -- and use your perch to do what you are called to do!

Until next week,

Jane