

March 13, 2020

Dear Colleagues:

I just returned from the grocery store and was surrounded by others – many parents struggling to figure out how to manage their jobs and their children in the face of the COVID-19 pandemic. Maryland, where I live, has closed all schools and most universities. Many are teleworking. The metro is sparsely used. My son and his fiancé are looking at postponing their May 2 wedding. Our daily lives are up in the air in every respect. But solutions are unfolding and good will is in large supply. We are all in this together and we will get through it – together. I am so grateful for our health care professionals who are on the front line.

1. Washington Works to Respond to COVID-19

Congress is working to respond to the pandemic on multiple levels. To date 7 members of Congress have announced that they have been exposed to someone with COVID-19 and are self-quarantining. A staff member of Sen. Maria Cantwell (D-WA) has tested positive for the virus and Sen. Cantwell has closed her office. The U.S. Capitol has ceased public tours, both those member and staff led. The Capitol complex, including House and Senate office buildings, is restricted to official business only. Rep. Dean Phillips (D-MN) noted “We should encourage people to not travel here right now.” DC Mayor Muriel Bowser has declared the District a state of emergency and limited gatherings. Likewise, the Governors of Maryland and Virginia have declared states of emergency and limited gatherings.

President Trump and other cabinet members have likewise been exposed to at least one person who has tested positive. To date, they are not self-quarantining.

Legislation to Address Virus:

On March 6, Congress quickly passed an emergency response \$8 billion bill to help states and localities address the pandemic. Leader Pelosi (D-CA) has been negotiating with Treasury Secretary Steve Mnuchin on a second multi-billion-dollar package which is reported to address issues like paid sick leave and food and nutrition for those in need. This bill could pass the House today. Sen. Patty Murray (D) has introduced the Supporting Students in Response to Coronavirus Act – a \$3 billion bill which would include \$1.2 billion for education preparedness and support grants; \$600 million for early care and education programs; \$1.2 billion for emergency financial aid for students and \$3 million for the National Child Traumatic Stress Network. Additionally there would be new flexibility for students and institutions of higher education to ensure continued access to federal financial aid during the epidemic.

The House is scheduled to go into recess for a week beginning today. This is likely to occur so long as the bill noted above is passed. The Senate, which was also scheduled to go into recess today, will stay in session next week to take up the package the House is developing.

It is reported that the appropriations process is continuing as planned; however, that could change.

U.S. Department of Education:

The Department of Education issued a notice to all of its employees that they should be prepared to telework. A Summit on the Special Education Teacher shortage scheduled for next week sponsored by the Department of Education was cancelled. We are all staying tuned for further developments.

See: <https://www.washingtonpost.com/nation/2020/03/12/coronavirus-cantwell-staffer/>

See: <https://www.axios.com/ted-cruz-coronavirus-self-quarantine-0c85ef4e-8022-43c9-9196-ab2d43db3aba.html>

See: <https://www.politico.com/news/2020/03/11/lawmakers-capitol-visits-coronavirus-125965>

See: https://osepideasthatwork.org/federal-resources-stakeholders/attract-prepare-retain-osep-See: national-summit-improving-effective-personnel-children-disabilities?utm_content=&utm_medium=email&utm_name=&utm_source=govdelivery&utm_term=

See: <https://www.usnews.com/news/education-news/articles/2020-03-09/coronavirus-takes-toll-on-k-12-and-higher-education>

2. Guidance from the U.S. Department of Education on COVID-19

The Department of Education has issued guidance on a number of topics related to both K-12 and higher education. They include providing services to students with disabilities during the coronavirus, student privacy and COVID-19, ESSA accountability requirements during coronavirus, and guidance for higher education during interruption of study during coronavirus.

See: <https://www.ed.gov/coronavirus>

3. Rare Bipartisan Rebuke of DeVos Rule on Defrauded Students

This week the Senate passed a bill blocking Sec. DeVos' regulation which makes it harder for defrauded students loan borrowers have their debts forgiven. The bill, H.J. Res. 76 (116), passed the House last month and was endorsed by a bi-partisan group of Senators with a 53-42 vote. Ten Republican Senators voted to block the DeVos regulation. It is not clear if President Trump will sign the bill. At one point the White House threatened a veto, yet President Trump has said he is "neutral" on the bill. The Congress does not have a veto-proof majority to overcome a possible veto.

See: <https://thehill.com/homenews/senate/487037-senate-votes-to-reverse-devos-student-loan-rule>

4. New Resources for Educators

- **The National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC)** has issued a report outlining standards, qualifications, roles, supports and compensation for the profession of early childhood educators working with children ages birth through age 8. <http://powertotheprofession.org/>
- **GLSEN** has released a report which finds that 2 in 5 LGBTQ students of color are harassed on the basis of both race and sexual identity. See: <https://www.glsen.org/lgbtq-youth-color>

Sending you all my very best regards. Be well and stay in touch!

Best,

Jane