

February 17, 2021

Dear Members of the Michigan Congressional Delegation:

Given our statewide reach – with members in every county of our state – MEA has seen and heard the diverse impacts on public education caused by the COVID-19 crisis. From urban to suburban to rural communities, this pandemic has had varied effects on students, educators, parents, school districts and communities. As such, one-size-fits-all solutions are problematic, since effective local decisions need to be made with input from communities and educators alike.

We appreciate the actions taken thus far by Congress to help schools keep students and educators safe and learning during the pandemic, especially given the challenges of ensuring the resources you provide are flexible enough to meet those varied local needs. Given the latest CDC guidance provided for schools, that flexibility is essential right now so individual school buildings can take necessary steps to keep everyone safe.

As you discuss further COVID relief for public education, we encourage you to ensure all schools get the funding they need to make the protections advised by the CDC a reality for all students and school employees. While this virus has impacted our schools in different ways, it has impacted ALL schools in some way – and ALL schools need support. Past efforts to use federal Title 1 formulas to distribute funds were a necessary start, given many communities in our state needed additional support to manage this crisis. Now, however, more students and districts need additional Congressional support to move forward safely and effectively moving ahead.

[A story in Bridge Magazine about the December relief provided to schools](#) highlights the issue, using a Kent County example: “Godfrey-Lee Public Schools in Grand Rapids will get an infusion of cash equivalent to about \$1,413 per student. That’s half the amount per student that neighboring Grand Rapids Public Schools (\$2,881 per student), but 15 times more than nearby Forest Hills Public schools (\$91 per student).”

Clearly, COVID-19 doesn’t recognize school district boundaries, and how Congressional funding is allocated going forward needs to reflect that reality. Recently, Michigan school management groups suggested a solution wherein half the funding allocated for schools in the upcoming COVID relief package are distributed via the Title 1 formula and the other half on a per-pupil basis to all public schools. We believe that kind of approach has merit, perhaps weighting slightly more to Title 1 to address equity concerns for students in poverty. In any case, we encourage you to look creatively at solutions that balance the need to further equity in school funding for students in need with the realities of keeping everyone safe amidst this pandemic.

If MEA can be of any assistance in those efforts, please let us know.

Sincerely,



Paula Herbart  
MEA President