



1201 16th Street, NW | Washington, DC 20036 | Phone: (202) 833-4000

Rebecca S. Pringle
President

Princess R. Moss
Vice President

Noel Candelaria
Secretary-Treasurer

Kim A. Anderson
Executive Director

April 29, 2022

Democratic U.S. Senators
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Senator:

On behalf of our 3 million members and the 50 million students they serve, we wish to underscore the importance of continuing to a potential reconciliation bill that tackles pressing concerns facing households across the country. As you continue that work, we share educators' priorities and their belief that these initiatives should be open to all, regardless of immigration status.

PRE-K / CHILD CARE

- Make high-quality, free, inclusive, and mixed-delivery preschool programs available to all three- and four-year-olds on a voluntary basis.
- Pay child care workers a living wage—currently, the poverty rate among child care workers is more than double that of other women workers.
- Existing pre-K programs serve just 6 percent of three-year-olds and 34 percent of four-year-olds.
- Low-income families spend 28 percent of their earnings on center-based child care—far above the 7 percent benchmark for affordable care, according to the Department of Health and Human Services.

CHILD NUTRITION

- Empower more schools to offer free, healthy meals to all their students through the Community Eligibility Provision.
- Extend the summer Electronic Benefits Transfer (EBT) nationwide to all students receiving free or reduced-price school meals.
- Extend the U.S. Department of Agriculture's authority for child nutrition waivers that allow schools to offer free meals to all students during the COVID-19 pandemic.
- USDA's waiver authority will expire at the end of June unless Congress acts, leaving millions of children at risk of hunger or poor nutrition.

HIGHER EDUCATION

- Make college more affordable and accessible by increasing institutional aid for HBCUs and other minority-serving institutions, and increasing the annual maximum Pell grant.

- Increase support for Grow Your Own programs and paid teacher residency programs, and other professional learning opportunities for teachers to cultivate the educator workforce pipeline.
- According to a survey of NEA members released in February, 55 percent of educators are ready to leave the profession sooner than previously planned. A disproportionate number of those weighing their options are Black and Hispanic/Latino educators (62 percent and 59 percent, respectively), who are already under-represented in the profession.

PAID LEAVE

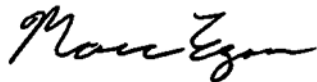
- Establish a national, universal, comprehensive program for paid family and medical leave to help ensure that workers can take the time they need to address serious health and caregiving needs.
- Require employers to provide paid sick leave and restore tax credits for doing so. Emergency measures instituted in response to the pandemic have expired—people must choose between staying home so they can get better, or going to work so they can get paid.
- Approximately one-fifth of working people do not have guaranteed paid sick leave—among them, many education support professionals who work part-time.

TAXATION

- Restore and make permanent changes in the child tax credit that expired at the end of 2021 (fully refundable, \$3,600 per year for children under age 6, \$3,000 per year for children ages 6 to 17).
- According to the Center on Poverty and Social Policy at Columbia University, the poverty rate rose 41 percent the month after the changes expired—an increase that represents nearly 4 million more children falling into poverty.
- Latino and Black children experienced the largest percentage-point increases in poverty (7.1 percentage points and 5.9 percentage points, respectively).
- Ensure that corporations and the wealthiest Americans pay their fair share.

Congress acted on President Biden’s proposal to invest in our nation’s physical infrastructure, but proposed investments in our human infrastructure remain necessary as more and more households are hurting. We urge you to include the provisions specified above in any reconciliation bill.

Sincerely,



Marc Egan
Director of Government Relations
National Education Association