

NYSUT Alert – December 23, 2020 - Update from NYSUT

Please read below for an important update and resource:

1. A Promise Kept: A Public Educator Running the U.S. Department of Education

This week, President-elect Biden announced his intention to nominate Miguel A. Cardona to be the next U.S. secretary of education. Cardona, who currently serves as the Commissioner of Education in Connecticut, is a lifelong public educator. His entire career has been spent in public schools, serving as a fourth-grade teacher, a principal, and an assistant superintendent. By picking Mr. Cardona, President-elect Biden kept his campaign pledge to teachers to appoint someone with real experience in public education to run the U.S. Department of Education. This should bring an end to the four years of attacks on public schools and teachers unions we have seen under Betsy DeVos. For more information, read the [AFT](#) and [NEA](#) statements on Mr. Cardona's appointment.

2. Congress passed the COVID-19 relief bill

Congress passed the COVID-19 relief bill and awaits action by President Trump. In addition to the funding for education, higher education and broad band, the bill includes funding for the following:

- \$600 stimulus payments to adults earning up to \$75,000
- Reinstates supplemental federal unemployment benefits at \$300 a week for 11 weeks.
- \$13 billion in nutrition benefits- Increases SNAP benefits by 15 percent to provide additional funding to food banks and senior nutrition programs as well as provides college students access to SNAP.
- \$250 million for Head Start
- State Vaccine Support-\$22 billion for states to support testing, tracing and COVID-19 mitigation programs.
- Education funding-\$82 billion (prek-12 and higher education). This funding will also support HVAC repair and replacement to mitigate virus transmissions and reopen classrooms.

According to a press release from Schumer \$5.8 billion will be made available to New York as follows:

\$5.8 Billion – Education Stabilization Fund

- **\$4B** – Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief Fund, provides relief to K-12 public schools across the State of New York.

- **\$1.4B** – Higher Education Emergency Relief Fund, directs funds to New York's university system, like SUNY and CUNY.

- **\$313M** – Governor's Emergency Education Relief Fund, the governor can use these funds at his discretion to support the state's K-12 education and higher education needs related to COVID-19.

- The bill also expands Pell Grants and raises the maximum award.
- The bill does not contain language requiring schools to be open for in-person instruction in order to receiving funding.
- Maintenance of Effort (education and higher education) language requires states to keep their FY2022 funding at the same or higher percentage of their budget they had for the average of FY's 2017, 2018 and 2019.

The New York State Education Department Interim Commissioner, Betty Rosa and Vice Chancellor T. Andrew Brown issued a statement yesterday thanking the Congressional delegation for the much-needed federal relief for education and broadband. In the statement, they urged the Governor to use this money to supplement funding rather than replace state dollars. [Statement From Vice Chancellor T. Andrew Brown, Interim Commissioner Betty A. Rosa and the Board of Regents | New York State Education Department \(nysed.gov\)](#)

NYSUT issued a statement echoing the remarks of the Interim Commissioner and Vice Chancellor as well as our advocacy for a two-pronged approach. New York needs more federal assistance to recover from the financial impact of COVID-19 as well as raise state revenues by asking the ultrawealthy to pay their fair share in taxes.

[NYSUT statement on federal COVID emergency relief funding for NY schools](#)

3. Vaccination Factsheets

Federal recommendations have come out stating that Pre-K-12 teachers and support staff will be a priority group in phase one vaccinations. These vaccinations are expected to start in the coming weeks after a sufficient number of health care workers and residents and staff of long-term facilities are vaccinated. Learn more about the vaccines and plans here:

[COVID Vaccine: What We Know](#)
[COVID Vaccine Distribution](#)