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February 25, 2021

Dr. Carissa Moffat Miller
Chief Executive Officer
Council of Chief State School Officers
1 Massachusetts Ave NW
Washington, D.C. 20001

Dear Dr. Moffat Miller:

The coronavirus pandemic has wreaked havoc on families across the country. For nearly a year, children have been pushed out of their classrooms and forced to learn from behind a screen. While most businesses have fought to reopen since last March, many states and local communities have kept their public schools closed.

Research clearly indicates that it is safe to reopen schools.¹ Congress and the Trump administration worked together to quickly provide funding to states to help schools reopen and, to date, have appropriated nearly \$70 billion for education. Despite this amount being well over the funding CDC estimates² many schools need to implement COVID-19 mitigation strategies, schools remain closed. Whether it is because teachers' unions are reluctant to get back in the classroom or for some other reason, it is understandable that parents are deeply frustrated by continued school closures. It is time to reopen schools.

The Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO) is in a unique position to help schools reopen. The organization can bring together states for collaboration, as well as aid practitioners

¹ <https://covidschooldashboard.com/>

² <https://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/volumes/69/wr/mm6950e1.htm>

on the ground, identify common problems, and quickly relay pertinent information to policy makers.

The education of our nation's children must be everyone's priority. Despite past challenges implementing COVID-19 aid programs, we need to work together with the singular goal of reopening schools safely. To help policy makers better understand what reopening schools looks like in practice, please provide the following information no later than two weeks after receipt of this letter:

1. Who are state education officials looking to for assistance and information on how to best reopen schools?
2. How are state education officials working with their school district leaders to help them create and execute reopening plans?
3. How are state education officials communicating with each other about what has and has not worked in the states that have reopened and how to avoid the challenges those states have faced?
4. Concerns have been raised as to how the previously appropriated COVID aid has been spent. Are states monitoring school districts' use of those funds to ensure they are being spent appropriately?

We appreciate CCSSO's assistance in this effort. Partnerships are the key to fully reopening schools, and we look forward to talking with you as we all continue to push to reopen schools.

Sincerely,



Virginia Foxx
Ranking Member
Committee on Education and Labor



Burgess Owens
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Early Childhood,
Elementary, and Secondary Education