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Education relief receives \$82 billion in agreed-upon COVID-19 stimulus package

Late on Dec. 20, Congressional leaders reached agreement on a roughly \$900 billion COVID-19 stimulus package. While language for the final bill is not yet available, the deal is set to provide \$82 billion in education relief funds, with \$54.3 billion dedicated to public K-12 schools. Votes in both houses are expected sometime today, Dec. 21.

\$82 billion in education relief funds

While substantially less than the funding requested by education stakeholders or the amount proposed by either version of the House-passed HEROES Act or the Senate's proposed HEALS Act, the deal would provide \$82 billion in education relief funds. \$54.3 billion of those dollars will be set aside for K-12 public schools in an Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief Fund similar to the funds provided by the CARES Act. It is presumed these funds will be distributed based on the Title 1 formula.

Other education funding includes \$22.7 billion for higher education, \$4.05 billion for the Governor Emergency Relief Fund (which includes a set-aside for private K-12 schools), \$818.8 million for outlying areas and Bureau of Indian Affairs schools, and \$250 million for Head Start. There is also reportedly \$10 billion in funds for the Child Care and Development Block Grant program.

CARES Act Extension

Congress has extended the deadline for states and cities to use any unspent Coronavirus Relief Fund dollars allocated in the CARES Act. In California, a large portion of that funding was dedicated to education, and the deadline to spend these funds has been extended from Dec. 31, 2020 to Dec. 31, 2021. Dollars allocated under the Education Stabilization Fund in the CARES act will not expire until 2022 and do not require an extension at this time.

Lack of action on broadband funding

As it stands now, the relief bill includes a variety of funding to address broadband infrastructure and access. The original proposal to provide targeted funding for K-12

students and funding to close the digital divide through the E-Rate program has been removed from the bill. While most education organizations believe distributing digital divide funding through the E-Rate program is the most effective strategy, there continues to be resistance from some members of Congress as well as the Chair of the Federal Communications Commission.

However, there are some provisions that may help students and families to get connected:

- \$3.2 billion in emergency funds for low-income families to access broadband through an unspecified FCC fund.
- \$1 billion in a new tribal broadband fund.
- \$65 million to complete broadband maps pursuant to the Broadband DATA Act approved earlier this year.
- A \$300 million grant program to fund broadband in rural areas, though no details regarding this new program are currently available.

As the bill language is finalized and more details become available, CSBA will continue to keep members apprised of any developments. Votes are expected sometime today, Dec. 21, with leadership in both houses saying publicly they will not adjourn until votes are cast.



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