

3/25/2020

Some good news from Congress, although the Senate version of the federal aid for public education will not be sufficient to provide the needed financial support for schools.

Leaders from both parties have announced that the Senate is ready to vote on a \$2 trillion bi-partisan stimulus package to counter-act the impact of the COVID-19 crisis on the U.S. economy, families and businesses. The package will include direct payments to individuals and families: \$1,200 for individuals, \$2,400 for married couples, plus an additional \$500 for each child under age 17, with a phase out as incomes increase. It will also include \$500 billion for hard-hit industries, another \$350 billion for small business loans, \$250 billion for increased unemployment relief, and \$100 billion for hospitals and health systems.

Below we've provided some of the highlights of the provisions of the stimulus package impacting schools, child care, child nutrition and (general) unemployment aid. Please keep in mind we are still reviewing the details of the massive bill, and will provide more information as it becomes available. After a vote in the Senate, the bill will still need to be approved by the House.

Education Funding

The stimulus bill provides nearly \$31 billion in emergency education funding, with \$13.5 billion of that going towards formula grants for elementary and secondary education. \$14 billion of this funding will be provided to higher education. According to reports, about 90% of the funding for elementary and secondary schools will be distributed to local educational agencies (LEAs) to help them plan and coordinate for long-term school closures, including the purchase of educational technology for online learning.

The \$31 billion also includes \$3 billion for Governors to provide discretionary emergency support grants to LEAs that have been hit particularly hard by COVID-19. This funding would go towards supporting the continued provision of educational services and ongoing operations. Elementary and secondary schools, as well as institutes of higher learning, would be eligible for this emergency support.

The bill also includes \$50 million for the Institute of Museum and Library Services, for them to expand digital network access in areas of the country where such access is limited. Eligible uses of the funding include the purchase of internet-enabled devices and the provision of technical support in response to school service disruptions.

The total amount of education funding provided in the stimulus bill was ultimately a point of compromise between the Senate and the House. The Senate's previous proposal included roughly \$20 billion in education funding while the House had been calling for \$50 billion to help K-12 schools and another \$10 billion for institutes of higher learning.

Child Care & Early Learning

The deal includes \$3.5 billion for the Child Care Development Block Grant to allow child care programs to maintain critical operations, including emergency staffing needs and

ensuring child care access to first responder and health care workers. The bill also provides \$750 million to help Head Start meet emergency staffing needs.

Child Nutrition

The bill includes \$8.8 billion in additional funding for Child Nutrition Programs to ensure children continue to receive meals during school closures.

Unemployment Benefits

The stimulus bill includes both an increase in the benefits unemployed workers will receive and an expansion of who is eligible for such benefits. Specifically, the deal provides that, on top of regular state unemployment benefits, individuals will receive an additional \$600 per week, for up to four months. In addition, on top of the 26 weeks of benefits under California law, the bill would add an additional 13 weeks of extended benefits, fully covered by the federal government, for a total of 39 weeks. This would cover workers through the end of 2020. The bill also expands unemployment benefits to gig workers, independent contractors, and self-employed individuals, who do not traditionally qualify for such benefits, as well as furloughed employees, allowing them to stay on their company benefit plans and also collect unemployment.

We hope you are staying safe during these challenging times, and appreciate all you are doing to continue to serve our students.

Best,
Jack & Caitlin

Jack O'Connell
Partner
Capitol Advisors Group
925 L Street, Suite 1200
Sacramento, CA 95814
916-804-9026 mobile
916-557-9745 office
www.capitoladvisors.org

Caitlin Jung
Legislative Counsel
Capitol Advisors Group
925 L Street, Suite 1200
Sacramento, CA 95814
916-838-3254 mobile
916-557-9745 office
www.capitoladvisors.org

3/26/2020

We wanted you to know that the USDA has acted today on important waivers. The lack of flexibility on school meal programs has been front and center for us over the past few weeks. We reached out to the Deputy Secretary of Agriculture Stephen Censky and the Undersecretary Brandon Lipps who have both been very responsive. We are very excited that Secretary Sonny Perdue signed waivers today on several aspects of the law and regulation that needed to be relaxed.

Among the biggest issues you and others have raised with us was the insistence by regulators that each child be physically present in order to get a meal. We wanted parents/guardians to be able to pick up a child's meal without having the health risks involved with everyone showing up. This issue is among those addressed by waivers signed by the Secretary.

Below is a summary of the components of waivers announced by the USDA today, as well as a list of the waivers that the USDA has already put in place. We are also going to have a follow up call with Undersecretary Lipps on Monday to discuss any issues that remain. Each of these issues has a hyperlink to the related USDA guidance.

Newly Issued Waivers

Nationwide Parent/Guardian Meal Pickup Waiver: FNS is allowing states approved for non-congregate feeding to waive the rule preventing parents and guardians from picking up meals for their children, as long as they protect accountability and integrity. ([Guidance for States on the Meal Pickup Waiver](#))

Nationwide Meal Pattern Waiver: FNS has provided nationwide approval for states to locally waive specific meal pattern requirements as needed to support access to nutritious meals when certain foods are not available due to the novel coronavirus. ([Guidance for States on the Meal Pattern Waiver](#))

Nationwide Community Eligibility Provision (CEP) Data Waiver: FNS is extending CEP election, notification and reporting and deadlines for School Year 2020-21. ([Guidance for States on the CEP Waiver](#))

Previously Announced Waivers

Congregate Meal Waivers: FNS has approved waivers from all 50 states, DC, Guam, Puerto Rico, and the Virgin Islands, enabling Summer Food Service

Program (SFSP) and National School Lunch Program Seamless Summer Option (SSO) sponsors to serve meals in a non-congregate setting and at school sites during school closures related to the coronavirus. FNS also issued guidance on [meal delivery using existing authorities in summer meal programs](#).

Pandemic EBT: As a result of the Families First Coronavirus Response Act of 2020, children who would receive free or reduced price meals if not for school closures are eligible to receive assistance under this provision. USDA is providing guidance to state agencies on plan requirements in order to receive approval. ([Guidance for States on Pandemic EBT](#))

Nationwide Meal Times Waiver: FNS has provided a nationwide waiver to waive the requirement that Child Nutrition Program meals must follow meal service time requirements and also allow state agencies to adjust the time of meal services, including the suspension of meal times as needed. ([Guidance for States on the Meal Times Nationwide Waiver](#))

Nationwide Afterschool Activity Waiver: FNS has provided a nationwide waiver to waive the requirement that afterschool meals and snacks must be served in a school or program with an educational or enrichment purposes and that the meals and snacks must be served in a structured and supervised environment with an educational enrichment activity. ([Guidance for States on the Afterschool Activity Nationwide Waiver](#))

-Kevin

Kevin Gordon, President
Capitol Advisors Group, LLC
California's Leading Advocates for Education
925 L Street, Suite 1200
Sacramento, California 95814
916-847-9454 mobile
916-557-9745 office
www.capitoladvisors.org