

EDUCATION

Resolution EDU-21-25

A RESOLUTION ON PREPARING PUBLIC SCHOOLS FOR AN EMERGENCY

WHEREAS, the National Black Caucus of State Legislators has a long substantive history of fighting to close the large achievement gaps that exist in our country's public education system in the United States, and COVID-19 has exposed and exacerbated many of these gaps;

WHEREAS, the global pandemic caused by COVID-19 has shuttered at least 98,000 public schools in over 6,000 school districts impacting at least 50 million students in 48 states, the District of Columbia and four territories;

WHEREAS, school districts and individual schools were unprepared for a catastrophic event like the coronavirus,

WHEREAS, many scientists and health organizations, including the World Health Organization, predict the virus could flare-up in the winter of 2020-2021 and will be more deadly than the Spring of 2019; and

WHEREAS, the pandemic has illustrated that the districts that are the most vulnerable are those that serve the most ethnically diverse and are low income communities, and those districts are facing profound and dramatic educational achievement, accessibility, and financial gaps that will grow during the pandemic.

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, that the National Black Caucus of State Legislators (NBCSL) calls on the over 130,000 public schools to prepare an annual emergency preparedness plan for all public schools that includes:

- Ensuring each student has access to reliable technology
- A rapid distribution plan that ensures every student has requisite equipment to continue schooling within days of a district's closure
- Regular teacher training on remote teaching and tools
- Create a training seminar for parents and guardians on the use and role of technology in education
- A map of internet access and potential options for students without access to the internet
- A plan to engage students whose parents or guardians are essential workers or first responders that require students to be home alone or with siblings
- An annual survey of families in the district to determine the technological needs of the family for the student to learn effectively in the event of school closure
- A report and assessment of the remote education that happened under COVID-19 to learn from mistakes and improve for the future
- A plan for special need students or those with development disabilities
- A substantive plan to ensure these students can still receive school lunches they would otherwise have access to
- A plan to monitor and ensure student safety at home;

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BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that NBCSL calls on Congress and the President to authorize and appropriate a new program that will assist states and school districts to create, maintain and implement an annual emergency preparedness plan for all public-school districts;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the NBCSL encourages a plan to address the educational needs of students who have fallen behind due to the interruptions of the normal school systems, which may require students to attend school year-round to ensure they do not fall substantively behind; and

BE IT FINALLY RESOLVED, that a copy of this resolution be transmitted to the President of the United States, the Vice President of the United States, members of the United States House of Representatives and the United States Senate, and other federal and state government officials and agencies as appropriate.

SPONSOR(S): Senator Raumesh Akbari (TN) and Representative Karen Camper (TN)

Committee of Jurisdiction: Education Policy Committee

Certified by Committee Co-Chairs: Representative Rufus Straughter (MS) and Representative Sheryl Williams-Stapleton (NM)

Ratified in Plenary Session: Ratification Date is December 3, 2020

Ratification is certified by: Representative Gilda Cobb-Hunter (SC), President