

September, 1, 2020

The Honorable Pete Gaynor
Administrator
Federal Emergency Management Agency
500 C Street S.W.
Washington, D.C. 20472

Dear Administrator Gaynor:

Our organizations represent the educators and school personnel that provide elementary and secondary education to the nation's public-school students and are committed to ensuring our students and staff are safe as we kick off the 2020-21 school year.

We write to you to express concern with recent information from the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) indicating the agency intends to eliminate personal protective equipment (PPE) and disinfectants as eligible reimbursable expenses under Public Assistance for COVID-19.

We also understand that FEMA may seek to tie eligibility to an arbitrary distinction between "response" and "reopening." This proposed change to PPE coverage continues a troubling pattern of shifting costs and responsibilities onto state and local governments, including state and local education agencies, when they can least afford it.

All plans for schools to reopen include built-in requirements for PPE. PPE is a fundamental element of any COVID-19 operation. Changing policy guidance in the middle of a pandemic is impractical, sows confusion, unnecessarily complicates the process of reopening, and disrupts daily operations for all those impacted, including our schools. These changes come with significant bureaucratic and administrative burdens for states during the auditing process at the exact time state and local resources are critically strained.

FEMA and the Administration have long maintained that every disaster is federally supported, state managed, and locally executed. We ask FEMA to waive the state cost share for COVID-19 assistance, to maintain the current guidance on emergency protective measures, and encourage the Administration to provide clear guidance on eligibility of funding streams from across the federal government.

Sincerely,

AASA, The School Superintendents Association
American Speech-Language-Hearing Association
Association of Educational Service Agencies
Association of Latino Administrators and Superintendents
Association of School Business Officials International
American Association of Surgical Physician Assistants
American Federation of Teachers
Clearinghouse on Women's Issues
Council of Administrators of Special Education
Council of Chief State School Officers

Council of Great City Schools
EDGE Consulting Partners
Feminist Majority Foundation
National Association of Elementary School Principals
National Association of Secondary School Principals
National Association of State Directors of Special Education
National Education Association
National PTA
National Rural Education Association
National Rural Education Advocacy Collaborative
National School Boards Association
National Superintendents Roundtable