

Provide Personal Protective Equipment for Educators



Education support professionals and educators who remain in direct contact with students and the community during this pandemic urgently need personal protective equipment (PPE) to keep everyone safe. Congress should include an additional \$56 million in funding for PPE for these workers in its next COVID-19 package.

EDUCATORS AND EDUCATION SUPPORT PROFESSIONALS ARE ESSENTIAL, FRONTLINE WORKERS

- ▶ Educators and education support professionals are continuing to prepare and distribute school meals; clean, maintain, and secure school buildings; prepare and deliver materials to students; oversee technology needs; and perform other vital work during the COVID-19 pandemic.
- ▶ Anyone whose job requires that they come in contact with the public at this time should be considered a frontline worker whose job is essential to communities. This includes the ESPs and educators who are putting themselves and their families at risk to meet students' needs.
- ▶ Many schools and school districts are undertaking creative strategies to reach students and families. For example, in food service, some schools are providing "grab and go" meals outside of buildings and drive-thru options, or delivering meals to school bus stops or directly to students. All of these options are crucial in providing students with access to nutritious meals, yet all increase health risks to educators and ESPs, and to students and families.

INADEQUATE PPE RISKS WORKERS AND COMMUNITIES

- ▶ Although their work is essential, many ESPs and educators do not have the PPE they need given the heightened risks they face. This equipment would not only protect them from possible infection and illness; it would also protect the communities in which they live and work.
- ▶ In several states, including Kansas, Louisiana, West Virginia, and Texas, school districts were forced to shut down school meal programs, at least temporarily, after workers became ill with COVID-19. This denies students access to the meals they depend on, contributes to anxiety, and could prolong this crisis.
- ▶ PPE for educators and ESPs is particularly crucial in the absence of appropriate social distancing and inconsistent "stay-at-home" guidance in some parts of the country, inadequate testing for COVID-19 (particularly important, given that carriers can be asymptomatic), and insufficient contact tracing to identify and monitor people who have had contact with infectious individuals.
- ▶ Ensuring that ESPs and educators have PPE would enable them to continue doing essential work at a time of desperate need, while providing them the peace of mind they deserve.
- ▶ Congress should include an additional \$56 million in funding for PPE for frontline educators in its next COVID-19 relief package.