



ASBO INTERNATIONAL **2021–2022 U.S. LEGISLATIVE AGENDA**

The Association of School Business Officials International (ASBO) serves as the premier association for K–12 school business professionals, who are the key financial, administrative, and operations leaders serving our nation's schools. Learn more at asbointl.org.

Supporting Student Success During COVID-19 & Beyond

COVID-19's devastating effects have left nothing untouched, including K–12 public education. After school doors closed nationwide, educators have worked tirelessly to provide for students and staff, protect public health, and chart a safe path forward to reopening. Yet, these measures incurred significant costs—an ASBO and AASA analysis¹ estimates the average school district serving 3,659 students would spend an extra \$1.78 million to safely reopen due to COVID-19.

Before the pandemic, schools were already challenged to offset ever-increasing education costs with dwindling resources. Districts struggle to afford rising labor, health, and pension costs; facility, technology, and security upgrades; rising nutrition program costs and unpaid meal debt; resource-intensive services for special education, learning remediation and recovery, and counseling; and more.

While recent aid provided through federal COVID-relief legislation has extended a vital lifeline to schools during the pandemic, more will be needed to overturn years of disinvestment in education. Strong federal, state, and local partnerships are crucial to help schools come back stronger from this crisis, resolve longstanding inequities in education, and ensure all students can learn, thrive, and succeed.

¹“What Will It Cost to Reopen Schools?” ASBO International and AASA The School Superintendents Association, June 2020. <https://asbointl.org/ReopenSchools>

HOW CAN YOU SUPPORT OUR PUBLIC SCHOOLS?

Support robust **funding for public education** with minimal administrative burdens.

- Fully fund IDEA/special education and increase funding for ESSA Title I to help schools provide an equitable education for all students.
- Increase fiscal flexibility for school districts to address local needs, especially during a crisis (e.g., regarding allowable use of funds, spend timelines, maintenance of effort requirements, etc.).
- Preserve funding for federal investments in broadband initiatives to bridge the digital divide for students and communities, such as the E-Rate program.
- Ensure public dollars fund public schools. Oppose private voucher programs that divert taxpayer dollars into unaccountable schools.

Support federal investment in **school infrastructure** and safe and healthy learning environments.

- Include the Reopen and Rebuild America's Schools Act in any federal infrastructure package, which would invest \$130 billion in direct grants and school construction bonds to help high-need schools afford critical repairs to reopen safely and address longstanding health and safety issues.
- Provide funding, financing tools, and training to help schools address public and environmental health issues, improve school safety and climate, provide inclusive facilities to accommodate all learners' needs, and manage data privacy issues and cybersecurity threats.
- Update FEMA's Public Assistance program to help districts access funds and respond to emergencies by streamlining the application and reimbursement process; adding flexibility to address different emergencies, including pandemics; and aligning procurement rules with state laws.

Support sustainable **child nutrition and healthcare** programs in our schools.

- Provide funding, resources, and guidance to help states/districts improve access to healthy meals, resolve unpaid debt, and eliminate stigmas. A universal meal policy can address these issues and reduce administrative burdens for meal programs.
- Help districts address revenue losses and increased costs incurred during COVID-19 to safely feed students and operate meal programs in a financially sustainable way.
- Increase Community Eligibility Provision (CEP) flexibility to qualify for the program and meal reimbursement rates to ensure greater participation and provide support to students in need.
- Preserve and strengthen Medicaid and the Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP) and streamline billing and reimbursement processes for school-based Medicaid programs.
- Engage with education stakeholders to improve the regulatory environment for schools. Reduce and streamline Affordable Care Act (ACA) regulations to minimize administrative costs to comply with the law and refrain from reinstating rules that are difficult to implement. Change the definition of a full-time employee qualifying for health insurance to 35 hours/week and exempt substitute and variable-hour staff from coverage.

How Are Schools Spending Federal COVID-19 Relief Funds?

Schools are spending ESSER dollars to protect public health and safety, improve digital learning and broadband access, prevent layoffs, invest in learning recovery programs, and more.

ESSER funds are helpful but not sufficient to fully address long-term education needs, and districts must spend wisely to avoid a future fiscal cliff. Read ASBO's COVID-19 financial impact survey report to learn more at asbointl.org/COVIDsurvey.

LET'S WORK TOGETHER

ASBO International and its members offer our school finance and operations expertise to provide policymakers clearer insight into the challenges our nation's schools and students face today. By combining our education knowledge with your ability to create change through policy, we can achieve great things together and provide our children a brighter future.

For more information on how you can advocate for public schools, browse ASBO International's legislative resources at asbointl.org/Legislative.



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