

Detailed Explanation of the K-12 Funding Request in the American Rescue Plan

The American Rescue Plan includes a \$130 billion request for K-12 schools to safely reopen. This request is outlined in detail below.

Context on the CDC estimates cited in the 2/1 meeting

On December 18, 2020, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) issued a report to “estimate costs” associated with safely operating during the 2020-2021 academic year. The objective of the report was to “estimate costs in three categories: materials and consumables, additional custodial staff members, and potential additional transportation.” According to the report, “[n]ational average estimates, using the national pre-kindergarten through grade 12 (preK–12) public enrollment of 50,685,567 students, range between a mean of \$55 (materials and consumables only) to \$442 (all three categories) per student.”

Critically, the report did not aim to address all costs related to swift and safe school reopening. It was explicitly “not exhaustive,” and did not include significant resources schools need to safely reopen.

Most prominently, the report did not include:

- *\$50 billion for social distancing:* CDC’s current guidance for operating schools during COVID-19 recommends at least 6 ft of social distancing, including spacing seating and desks; and modifying learning stations and activities. However, the cost estimates produced by CDC under the prior administration doesn’t include any funding to increase staffing that would allow for such social distancing. Our estimates correct for that omission.
- *\$60 billion to avoid lay-offs and close budget gaps:* Additionally, CDC was not responsible for estimating the resources needed to avoid lay-offs of educators and staff. Already, local education has seen a decrease of more than 650,000 jobs. Without additional resources, local school districts may have to cut 318,000 jobs over the next year (if estimated budget cuts of 10% go into effect). And if schools do not have the teachers and custodians they need to allow for smaller class sizes, social distancing, and proper sanitation – which requires more staff, not less -- they are not going to be able to reopen. During the Great Recession, more than 34 states cut early childhood and K-12 spending, laying off more than 250,000 teachers and education workers in the process. This contributed to state and local austerity creating a significant drag on GDP growth in 23 of 26 quarters from 2008 through mid-2014.
- *\$3 billion for health staff:* Schools need at least one nurse or another trained health professional in order to operate in the midst of a global pandemic. These staff can support the identification and quarantine of students exposed or who test positive and also support testing efforts which are successfully supporting reopening in many communities.

- *\$9.5 billion for PPE and other materials:* CDC’s estimate only includes a 1-month supply of face masks. The CDC estimate assumes that teachers and staff members would purchase their own masks, and that schools would add masks to the student supply list. The President’s plan funds PPE for staff, as well as masks for low-income students and back-up masks for a small share of other students, for when they forget their mask.
- In addition, because it is not their job to do so, the CDC estimate does not account for the learning and social and emotional needs of our children. We estimate an additional \$46 billion to meet these needs, including closing the digital divide.

Full Detail on the President’s K-12 Funding Request

The President’s proposal covers a broader set of categories than CDC’s non-exhaustive 2020 report. It provides sufficient funds for districts to 1) avoid lay-offs into the next school year and 2) cover the additional costs districts must incur as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic and necessary for reopening, including supporting the academic, social and emotional needs of students. A breakdown of this funding is provided in the table below. It outlines the total need—\$199 billion—in relevant categories and then subtracts the dedicated relief funding for K-12 public schools in H.R. 133—\$54 billion—to come to a total additional need of \$145 billion.

These estimates cover the remainder of the 2020-2021 school year and into next school year. Funds are included for next year because we know that in order to invest in safely reopening, districts need financial certainty that they will not have to lay off teachers next fall in order to implement consistent COVID-19 safety protocols. They do not have that certainty right now. Further, school districts that are already open need more support to implement mitigation efforts that protect students, educators, and school staff.

Regular testing also supports safely getting kids back into school. The American Rescue Plan separately calls for \$50 billion to scale up our testing capacity, and we expect a significant portion of that funding to support testing for students, educators, and school staff.

The table below lists an “Estimate Source” for each funding category. These sources served as a base for analysis. Since sources often estimated only one year of costs, the listed cost is often higher, accounting for both the remainder of this school year and into next school year. Where possible, a link to the source is provided.

Need	Cost (B)	Estimate Source
Avoid Lay-offs <i>Closes budget holes so districts can avoid lay-offs this school year and next.</i>	60	Using data from Learning Policy Institute, Center on Budget & Policy Priorities, National Conference of State Legislatures.

<p>Materials and Consumables</p> <p><i>Provides funds for physical barriers and other materials CDC recommends to keep students safe. (PPE costs were removed and are included in PPE below.)</i></p>	3.5	CDC
<p>Additional Custodial Staff Members</p>	14	CDC
<p>Transportation</p> <p><i>Supports additional transportation investments to provide for social distancing on buses.</i></p>	14	CDC
<p>Personal Protective Equipment</p> <p><i>Provides PPE for staff, masks for students eligible for free or reduced price lunch, and back-up masks for other students that forget a mask.</i></p>	6	Draws on estimates from American Federation of Teachers (AFT) , CDC , American Association of School Business Professionals
<p>Social Distancing (Reducing class size)</p> <p><i>Increases instructional staffing levels by 10% (conservative estimate).</i></p>	50	AFT
<p>Health Staff</p> <p><i>Fund nurses at the 25% of schools without a nurse.</i></p>	3	American School Nurse Association
<p>Extended Learning Time & Support for students (tutors, summer school)</p> <p><i>This would provide meaningful academic support (for example, 20 days of additional instruction), for all low-income students, or a similar share of the student population. (This estimate is smaller than LPI's -- \$36 billion -- as it does not assume 100% take-up.)</i></p>	29	Learning Policy Institute
<p>Counselors and school psychologists</p> <p><i>Funds proper ratio of students-to-counselors. The pandemic is taking a dangerous toll on students' mental health, and many have experienced significant trauma. They need support while learning remotely and once back in school.</i></p>	10	American School Counselor Association BLS

<p>Digital Divide</p> <p><i>Funds Wi-Fi hotspots and devices for students without connectivity for remote learning. (Cost estimate considers aggressive implementation of HR 133's Emergency Broadband Benefit program.)</i></p>	7	Internal, leveraging Census Pulse Survey data
<p>Community Schools</p> <p><i>Community schools provide a range of wrap-around services and supports to students and families that have been particularly useful during the pandemic.</i></p>	.1	Internal
<p>COVID-19 Educational Equity Gap Challenge Grant</p> <p><i>States and tribal governments would use awarded funds to partner with teachers, parents, and other stakeholders to advance equity- and evidence-based policies to respond to COVID-19 educational equity challenges.</i></p>	2	Internal
Total K-12 Need	199	
<i>HR 133</i>	<i>-54</i>	
Remaining K-12 Need After HR 133	145 (199-54)	