

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

March 25, 2020

The Honorable Betsy DeVos
Secretary
U.S. Department of Education
400 Maryland Avenue S.W.
Washington, D.C. 20202

Dear Secretary DeVos:

As schools and colleges across the country close to combat the spread of COVID-19, some for the remainder of the school year, educators are working on contingency plans to facilitate distance learning and mitigate the instruction interruptions.

Given the challenges local education providers will face in setting up distance learning programs, we ask the Department of Education (the Department) to develop guidance and resources for primary, secondary, and higher education institutions in creating distance learning curriculums, including best practices and guidance regarding remote learning equipment procurement. We ask the Department to publicly publish information regarding resources for the benefit of educators across the country.

On March 21, the Department issued a notice clarifying that the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) should not prevent schools from offering distance learning instruction, instead instructing them to provide free and appropriate public education (FAPE) to students with disabilities. While we applaud this guidance, further resources are needed to support the permitted distance learning for all students, including those with disabilities.

At the federal level, the Smithsonian Learning Lab has already begun to provide distance learning resources for teachers and students. It would benefit our educators if the Department would coordinate with other federal programs such as the Smithsonian so that educators have a single repository for these resources. We are confident our educators will be creative in finding new ways to educate our students during this outbreak, provided they are aided by a single set of resources to build upon.

The outbreak of COVID-19 presents new challenges for educators and in a stressful environment. The Department should do all it can to ensure educators have the guidance and resources they need to support students temporarily out of the classroom at all levels of learning.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'J. Panetta'.

Jimmy Panetta
Member of Congress

A handwritten signature in blue ink, clearly legible as 'Brian Fitzpatrick'.

Brian Fitzpatrick
Member of Congress

A handwritten signature in blue ink, clearly legible as 'Debbie Dingell'.

Debbie Dingell
Member of Congress

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Ruben Gallego'.

Ruben Gallego
Member of Congress

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Derek Kilmer'.

Derek Kilmer
Member of Congress

A handwritten signature in blue ink, clearly legible as 'Conor Lamb'.

Conor Lamb
Member of Congress