



April 23, 2020

Representative Susan Davis
US House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20510

Representative Scott Peters
US House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20510

Representative Juan Vargas
US House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Representatives:

We write to request you include a significant infusion of resources in the next stimulus package for our nation's students. San Diego Unified appreciated the recent passage of the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act, which provides \$13.5 billion for K-12 education and represents an important first step. However, this level of funding is insufficient to cover the cost of the coronavirus pandemic, and simply not enough to stabilize education funding in the face of an emerging economic recession. During these difficult times, we write to request your partnership as we implement a robust online distance learning plan, feed students in San Diego, and prepare to persevere during this unprecedented challenge.

San Diego Unified is the second largest school district in California, serving more than 121,000 students in preschool through grade 12 with a strong commitment to close persistent achievement gaps. The vast majority of our students are from communities of color, 60 percent of our children live in low-income families, and 8,000 children are from military families. According to the National Center for the Education Statistics, San Diego Unified outperformed other urban school districts in a nationwide test that measures math and reading scores for fourth and eighth grade students. A 2019 case study from UCLA's Center for the Transformation of Schools found that San Diego Unified increased overall A-G completion rates. Between 2011 and 2019, overall A-G completion rates increased from 43.9% to 73%, for African-American students from 37.9% to 66.6%, and for Latino students from 26.3% to 65.6%. Our district ensures access to rigorous coursework to all students, centers equity in teaching and learning, and invests in the professional learning of our educators.

San Diego Unified has made significant and meaningful progress to close persistent achievement gaps. However, the coronavirus pandemic is the biggest adaptive challenge confronting our students and teachers, coupled with an emerging economic recession that threatens to erode the progress we have made. In response to the coronavirus pandemic, San Diego Unified has opened 22 meal pick-up locations for students, where over 500,000 meals have been provided to students. We have also distributed over 47,000 computers to students as we enter the next phase of our online distance learning plan. This shift is resulting in unforeseen costs that are essential to prevent the loss of learning and ensure the health and safety of our students, families, and staff.

For these reasons, we write to request your commitment to the following areas:

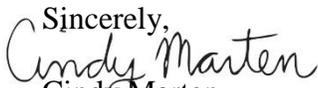
Education Stabilization Fund – The 2008 economic recession included a significant downturn in state revenues that took more than ten years to fully recover. In this next recession, school districts are confronting new unforeseen costs and a significant drop in revenues. As a result, a coalition of national education organizations is respectfully requesting \$175 billion in the next stimulus package. However, we know from our experience with the 2008 recession that it will take many years for State education budgets to recover. Accordingly, stabilizing public school funding over the next few years will be critical, and therefore, we respectfully request Congress appropriate \$350 billion over the next two fiscal years. We respectfully urge Congress to distribute this funding through the Title I formula. Districts can use these funds for coronavirus-related activities, including preparing for and responding to long-term school closures; purchasing educational technology to support online learning for all students; meeting the social and emotional needs of our children; and to stabilize public school funding.

IDEA and Title I – San Diego Unified serves approximately 15,000 children with disabilities, many of whom are children from military families, 60,000 children who are eligible for free or reduced price lunch, 27,000 English learners, and over 6,000 children who are homeless or in foster care. We ask Congress to include \$13 billion for IDEA and \$12 billion for Title I.

Impact Aid: San Diego Unified serves more than 8,000 military families. The Impact Aid program is critical to helping us meet the needs of our children from military families but funding for the program only supports approximately 55% of the need. In addition to resources to states for K-12 education, we urge Congress to fully fund Impact Aid. This will require \$800 million to fill the gap between fully funding the Basic Support program and the appropriated funding level for 2020. Additionally, we request that Congress appropriate \$45 million to increase per-student payments from \$1,200 to \$2,000 for students with disabilities, \$45 million for federal property to support districts with non-taxable federal land.

E-Rate: San Diego Unified is working hard to ensure every student has the opportunity to continue to learn during this crisis. Congress must provide an additional \$2 billion to the E-Rate program for technology and connectivity to ensure all children have access to meaningful distance learning.

Once again, thank you for your leadership and continued support for the children and families attending San Diego Unified. As you know, San Diego Unified has made great strides over the years, and faces the new challenges from a position of strength and progress. We look forward to the opportunity to meet with you and further discuss how Congress can support the children, families, and educators of San Diego.

Sincerely,

Cindy Marten
Superintendent


John Lee Evans
Board President


Richard Barrera
Board Vice President


Kevin Beiser
Board Trustee


Michael McQuary
Board Trustee


Sharon Whitehurst-Payne
Board Trustee