

(SUGGESTED LETTER)  
(PLEASE FEEL FREE TO PERSONALIZE AND EDIT)

Dear (title) (name)

Thank you for supporting additional funding for schools under the CARES Act to help schools recover from effects of the COVID19 pandemic.

Public school teachers and administrators have been extraordinary during the pandemic – serving meals, revising curriculum and providing instruction for remote learning. Their efforts are a reminder of how essential public schools are to the overall health and vitality of our communities. The pandemic challenges will continue at least through the rest of 2020 as public schools adapt to a “new normal” to keep students and staff safe.

I am writing to ask you to support Indiana’s public school districts in allowing them to allocate CARES Act ESSER funds using the formula that has been used for decades.

The formula for public school districts to share an “equitable distribution” of Title 1 funds with students from non-public schools in their area is based on the number of **non-public school students living in poverty**. The formula is based on precedent and law, specifically Section 1117 of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA), as interpreted by US Department of Education as recently as October 2019.

Instead the US Department of Education issued “guidance” on April 30 that districts must set aside a portion of the CARES Act relief money for private school students by calculating the share of **all students** in the area who attend private school, not the share of **low-income students**.

Using that guidance would deprive Indiana’s public school students of \$10.5 million, and it would triple the amount for non-public school students. I don’t think that is what Congress intended with the CARES Act.

Indiana’s larger public school districts will suffer the largest losses because these districts contain a high number of non-public schools.

Since non-public schools are eligible for the Payroll Protection Program, and public schools are not, giving non-public schools a larger share of CARES Act funding at the expense of public schools creates one more advantage for non-public schools.

Ninety percent of Indiana students attend public schools. It is important to Indiana’s future that our public schools are adequately funded to recover from the pandemic.

Non-public school students will still get their equitable distribution if Indiana school districts follow the existing formula established in the ESEA.

Indiana is a law-abiding state. I encourage you to support the historic precedent of following the law, as set forth in Section 1117, of the ESEA – not the temporary guidance of the US Department of Education.

Sincerely,

Name

Address

Phone number/email address