



A Union of Professionals

Specific AFT Priorities for Coronavirus Aid Package 4

State and Local Essential Services, Including Education

Replenish and enhance the education stabilization fund for K-12 and higher education with at least \$175 billion. Given anticipated loss of tax revenues, state and local governments will clearly need substantially more federal support to deliver critical public services, such as educating our nation's public school students, and maintaining a public service workforce.

Invest in summer school, after-school programs, and community schools that will make up for the lost instructional time during the 2019-20 school year by providing significant additional funding for Title I and the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act for the 2020-21 school year with \$25 billion divided evenly (on top of regular appropriations). While the full extent of the current crisis continues to evolve, we already know that despite their best efforts to support students and families, districts and schools will be faced with students who have experienced extended months of learning loss, significant poverty, trauma, and unmet social emotional needs.

Incorporate the Restoring Tax Fairness for States and Localities Act (passed the House in 2019), which will help middle-class workers as well as state and local governments.

Provide additional aid in direct, unrestricted funds for state and local governments via the Coronavirus Relief Fund established by the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act. The funds provided through the CARES Act do not fully address the substantial losses of revenue state and local governments are experiencing at a time when there is a sharp increase in the demand for services.

Increase investment to close or narrow the digital divide. High-speed broadband, reliable mobile service, and modern technology and hardware are no longer optional but core infrastructure needs of businesses, schools and homes across the country. The nation's students, educators, families and employers need this connectivity now.

- Provide emergency funding to support remote and distance learning, including direct funding through the E-Rate program for hotspots, connection devices and mobile wireless service.

Allocate \$50 billion for early childhood education programs. Fifty percent of child care providers would not survive economically for more than two weeks without significant public investment and support that would allow them to compensate and retain staff, pay rent or mortgages, and cover other fixed costs.

Provide a bold infrastructure plan that includes schools and will create jobs to facilitate economic recovery and address substantial needs.

The **American Federation of Teachers** is a union of professionals that champions fairness; democracy; economic opportunity; and high-quality public education, healthcare and public services for our students, their families and our communities. We are committed to advancing these principles through community engagement, organizing, collective bargaining and political activism, and especially through the work our members do.

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Create intellectual property protections and assurances for instructors' course material and content that is posted online to ensure that content still belongs to the faculty member, not to the online platform, service provider, or the institution.

Healthcare Policies

Establish and fund a czar to oversee the supply chain of personal protective equipment to help ensure that production and distribution of PPE are being efficiently managed and supplied to workers.

Reopen Affordable Care Act exchanges to enable anyone who wants insurance coverage to get coverage.

Forgive the student loan debt of healthcare workers required to work during this pandemic.

Significantly increase appropriations for federal healthcare workforce programs so that the nation is prepared for the next crisis.

Substantially **increase Medicaid** funding.

Ensure that patients, including the uninsured, will not be responsible for **out-of-pocket costs for COVID-19 treatment**.

Increase funding for **community health centers** that support underserved populations.

Safeguard our nation's research workforce and capabilities at research universities, medical schools, and teaching hospitals by implementing policies that provide flexibility for research institutions to cover salaries and benefits for personnel engaged in sponsored activities and cover those costs during the period that the institution is effected by the national health emergency.

Economic and Worker Issues

Establish a COVID-19 oversight committee as proposed by House Speaker Nancy Pelosi to determine not just what happened, but also to adequately prepare our healthcare system for the future challenges and look at how our economy has the right stimuli it needs to ensure a quick recovery for poor, working- and middle-class workers and families.

Protect public employee pensions from being gutted for other purposes, and provide aid to troubled pension plans at the same level as aid to employers is provided. There is also an urgent need to address the looming multiemployer pension crisis. Congress must also extend and improve the

single-employer pension funding stabilization rules and take additional steps to help address the impact of extreme market losses.

Precondition industry aid to job preservation.

Create a trigger to **enable relief and recovery aid to keep flowing as long as economic conditions warrant**. Time-based aid makes no sense, particularly when facing as uncertain an economic shock as the current one. Unemployment insurance benefits, direct cash payments to households, and the aid to state and local governments should wind down gradually as economic conditions warrant.

Include all borrowers in existing student debt relief. The existing student debt relief (*six months suspension of payments, 0% interest and a possible stop to involuntary collections*) leaves out approximately 9 million student loan borrowers, about 20 percent of all borrowers. These are borrowers who have commercially held Federal Family Education Loan Program loans or Perkins loans.

Provide additional aid for student loan relief. The government should make payments on behalf of borrowers, not just suspend them, and institute additional changes to make existing forgiveness programs (like Public Service Loan Forgiveness) easier to access.

Require and equip the Federal Reserve to:

- Ensure liquidity in the market for municipal bonds, including via the purchase of longer-term bonds;
- Ensure that bridge lending is available for states that face cash-flow issues because of the new tax filing deadline; and
- Provide other appropriate support to state and local governments in their efforts to fund essential services.

Ensure U.S. workers have protections against being forced to work in unsafe conditions. Currently, there are no explicit protections for worker safety in the legislation that has passed, including for industries seeking public aid.

Provide enhanced pay to healthcare workers deemed essential and required to work during the COVID-19 pandemic and other national emergencies.

Fund OSHA enforcement.

Mandate an emergency temporary standard (and eventually a permanent standard) to protect healthcare and at-risk workers from COVID-19.

Prohibit employers from denying paid sick leave, particularly for healthcare workers who endanger each other and patients when forced to work while sick.

Ensure protection and flexibility for workers on visas, including international students, such as issuing Temporary Protective Status to higher education student workers currently on F, M, or J visas and automatically extending Employment Authorization Documents for DACA recipients.

Clarify that for contingent faculty there is not a reasonable assumption of continued employment in between semesters, so as to **ensure access to unemployment insurance benefits**.

Make existing student loan forgiveness easier to access for those who've worked in public service for 10 years, even if during an economic contraction they lose full-time employment, by eliminating the requirement that a borrower continue to be employed in public service at the time they receive Public Service Loan Forgiveness, even if they have met all the other requirements to earn forgiveness.