

March 4, 2024

The Honorable Patty Murray
Chair
Senate Committee on Appropriations
The Capitol, Room S-128
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Susan Collins
Vice Chair
Senate Committee on Appropriations
The Capitol, Room S-146A
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Tammy Baldwin
Chair
Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human
Services, and Education, and
Related Agencies
Dirksen Senate Office Building, Room 136
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Shelley Moore Capito
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human
Services, and Education, and
Related Agencies
Hart Senate Office Building, Room 125
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chair Murray, Vice Chair Collins, Chair Baldwin, and Ranking Member Capito:

As you and your colleagues finalize the Fiscal Year (FY) 2024 appropriations, we respectfully request that you extend by one year the obligation deadline for funding made available under section 2001(b)(1) of the American Rescue Plan Act of 2021 for the purposes of serving homeless children and youth (ARP-HCY).

The unanimous approval of the bipartisan amendment offered by Senators Lisa Murkowski (R-AK), Joe Manchin (D-WV), Dan Sullivan (R-AK), Kyrsten Sinema (I-AZ), Susan Collins (R-ME), and Rob Portman (R-OH) to set aside \$800 million in the American Rescue Plan (Public Law 117-2) for the education of homeless children and youth was significant. These funds were first appropriated during the height of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2021 in response to evidence that children and youth experiencing homelessness were disproportionately impacted by school closures, yet largely overlooked in the first two COVID-19 packages. Unfortunately, the number of students experiencing homelessness has grown significantly, with a 16% increase in the number of families in homeless shelters last year alone – and that number doesn't include the majority of homeless children and youth who move between couches, motels, and other locations. The simple fact is that child and youth homelessness is higher now, and the need is greater, than prior to or during the pandemic.

ARP-HCY funds have been transformative in the lives of children, youth, and families that have experienced homelessness, reaching more than twice as many school districts compared to annual homeless education funding. These funds are particularly impactful because of their flexibility – ARP-HCY funds can be used in unique ways to meet a wide range of needs, from transportation to school supplies to cell phones to store cards to short-term motel stays. However, clarity about the flexible use of these funds was not communicated to States until the U.S. Department of Education issued guidance in September 2023 – more than 2.5 years after the

funds were first appropriated, ultimately leaving state and local educational agencies with less than 12 months to obligate ARP-HCY funds.

With the obligation deadline looming just months from now, schools are running out of time to thoughtfully and effectively use ARP-HCY funds, despite unprecedented homelessness. A one-year extension in the obligation date would allow schools to use ARP-HCY funds in the most strategic way possible for one additional school year, meeting needs as they arise in the most impactful ways, and leveraging them for continued support. A longer timeline also would allow state education agencies time to reallocate ARP-HCY funds more equitably to communities with unique needs. Of particular concern are rural communities, who have unmet need as a result of broad systemic failures, yet are often left out of these funding opportunities. Finally, an extended obligation timeline would provide more time for schools to sustain the innovative programming and partnerships that have been put in place.

We recognize that difficult decisions will have to be made in regards to budget, and we respect your due diligence. Our ask is clear and it does not cost anything. We urge you to include a one-year extension of the obligation deadline for ARP-HCY funds in the current FY 2024 budget.

Sincerely,



Lisa Murkowski
United States Senator



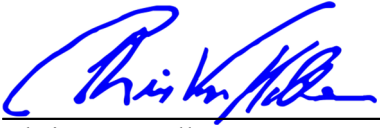
Joe Manchin III
United States Senator



Kyrsten Sinema
United States Senator



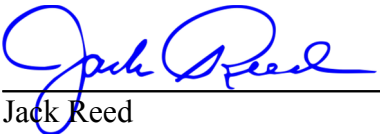
Richard Blumenthal
United States Senator



Chris Van Hollen
United States Senator



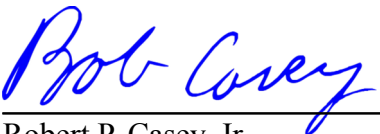
Martin Heinrich
United States Senator



Jack Reed
United States Senator



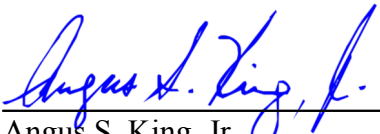
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John Fetterman
United States Senator



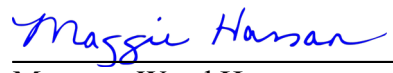
Angus S. King, Jr.
United States Senator



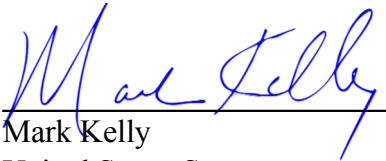
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Catherine Cortez Masto
United States Senator



Maggie Hassan
United States Senator



Mark Kelly
United States Senator



Alex Padilla
United States Senator



Debbie Stabenow
United States Senator



Tammy Duckworth
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Dan Sullivan
United States Senator



Raphael G. Butler
United States Senator



Tina Smith
United States Senator



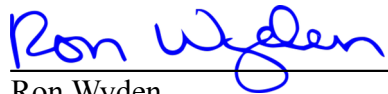
Richard J. Durbin
United States Senator



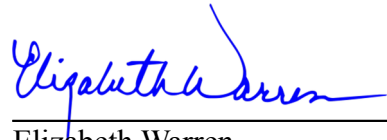
Michael F. Bennet
United States Senator



Jacky Rosen
U.S. Senator



Ron Wyden
United States Senator



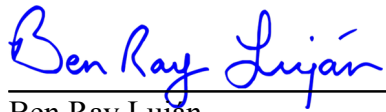
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United States Senator



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Christopher S. Murphy
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