

May 26, 2021

Dear Heather and Adosh,

On March 30, associations representing all of our state's public school districts sent you a letter identifying our goals with regard to the allocation of American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) aid to the state of Minnesota. Given the recently announced targets agreed to by legislative and executive branch leadership, we thought it important and timely to provide you with updated feedback on the use of the ARPA aid, specifically the 9.5% available to the state.

Due to the insufficient target amounts, we recommend consideration of allocating the 9.5% in the following manner:

- Use the flexible share of the ESSER 9.5% funding to assist school districts with declining enrollment. Districts responsibly hired or retained teachers and other staff based on estimated student enrollment that did not materialize due to the pandemic. There is no opportunity for school districts to make up the loss of revenue without the help of the state government allocating federal funds to school districts based on that lost enrollment. Without the help of this funding, school districts will continue to make budget reductions, reduce learning opportunities, increase class sizes, or be forced to ask local taxpayers for additional operating funds. Adequate funding is needed to maintain current staffing levels and accommodate the learning recovery of students. The governor and house leadership have been supportive of a declining enrollment, or “greater of” model.
- Address the disparities in the distribution of the ESSER funds by targeting a greater share of the ESSER allocations that are directed toward learning loss, summer enrichment, and afterschool programs to the school districts, intermediate districts and cooperatives that received little or no funding from the 90% allocation.
- Given that the \$525 million funding target for the E-12 Education bill will likely be insufficient to adequately address the important issues of diversifying our teacher workforce and addressing the mental health needs of our students, we recommend the ESSER allocation be used to address these important areas.

We hope this is helpful information. As negotiations continue toward final resolution, our Associations are prepared to provide additional help on funding and policy matters that will benefit all of our public school students.

Sincerely,

Scott Croonquist  
AMSD

Connie Norquist  
MASBO

Deb Henton  
MASA

Kirk Schneidawind  
MSBA