

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

August 25, 2020

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
Majority Leader
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Leader McConnell:

We members of the New York City Congressional delegation write to you in support of including robust higher education funding in the final Senate COVID-19 relief package, identical to those encompassed in S.4112 - *the Coronavirus Child Care and Education Relief Act* and H.R. 6800 – *the Health and Economic Recovery Omnibus Emergency Solutions (HEROES) Act*. Specifically, we ask that you include \$135 billion for the Higher Education Emergency Relief Fund (HEERF). Additionally, we ask that you include \$915 billion in emergency relief for states, localities, territories, and tribes as recognized in the HEROES Act. These funds for public campuses will help to defray expenses they have incurred because of the pandemic and assist them in meeting the variety of needs their students have at this time.

In recent weeks many campuses including the University of Arizona, the University of Massachusetts Boston, Ohio University, and the City University of New York (CUNY) have announced layoffs due to the financial impact of COVID-19 and cuts to state funding.¹ In fact CUNY, our nation’s largest urban university system that offers affordable education, announced the lay-off of 2,800 adjunct professors in anticipation of looming budget cuts.^{2/3} Without additional federal assistance, there is no guarantee that these layoffs will be reversed come Fall Semester and it is unclear how this will impact the thousands of low-income students the system serves. The Senate package must include \$915 billion in emergency relief as recognized in the *HEROES Act* to help states and local governments avert devastating cuts, particularly to education. Without this significant federal assistance, local governments such as New York City will be forced to balance their budgets on the backs of students and teachers. It is vital that this emergency funding is included in the next Senate package to save hundreds of thousands of jobs and help avert devastating cuts to funding for public education.

While we are grateful the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act (P.L. 116-136) included \$14.25 billion for Higher Education Emergency Relief Fund (HEER), which

¹ Diana Kwon. (2020). “As the Pandemic Hits Campus Finances, Faculty Face Layoffs”. *The Scientist*. 4 June 2020. Accessed on 30 June 2020. Retrieved from: <https://www.the-scientist.com/news-opinion/as-the-pandemic-hits-campus-finances-faculty-face-layoffs-67611>

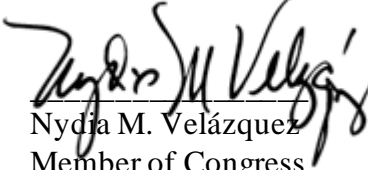
² Michael Elsen-Rooney. (2020). “Some CUNY colleges prepare to lay off adjuncts as budget cuts loom”. *New York Daily News*. 15 May 2020. Accessed on 30 June 2020. Retrieved from: <https://www.nydailynews.com/coronavirus/ny-coronavirus-cuny-adjuncts-20200515-44lr5omlgzdwbanuytf6ta75hi-story.html>

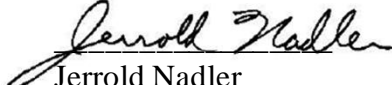
³ Marjorie Valbrun. “CUNY Layoffs Prompt Union Lawsuit”. *Inside Higher Ed*. 6 July 2020. Accessed on 12 August 2020. Retrieved from: <https://www.insidehighered.com/news/2020/07/06/economic-fallout-pandemic-leads-layoffs-cuny-and-union-lawsuit>

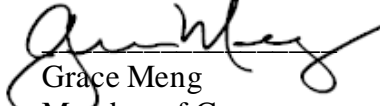
granted relief for Institutions of Higher Education and their students- additional assistance is needed to meet current challenges. Universities have already furloughed thousands of employees and announced revenue losses in the hundreds of millions, according to The Chronicle of Higher Education.⁴ For this reason, we urge you to include \$430 billion to support the educational needs of States, school districts, and institutions of higher education in response to coronavirus as recognized in S.4112 - *the Coronavirus Child Care and Education Relief Act* sponsored by Senator Murray and Senate Democratic Leader Schumer. Notably, this funding includes nearly \$132 billion to support public institutions of higher education and their students. We strongly urge you to include these stabilization funds for higher education to stave off a devastating crisis across America's postsecondary education system.

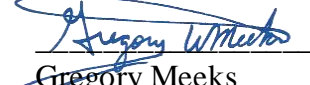
As we navigate this pandemic and try to determine what comes next, we ask that you make these higher education provisions a priority in the future COVID-19 Senate Relief package. After all, these institutions are nurturing our Nation's next generation of leaders. We call on you to rise to the demands of this unprecedented moment in history. We appreciate your consideration of this request.


Signed

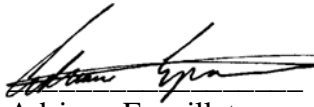

Nydia M. Velázquez
Member of Congress

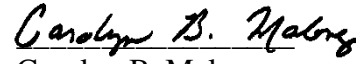

Jerrold Nadler
Member of Congress

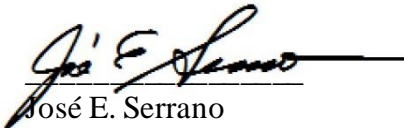

Grace Meng
Member of Congress

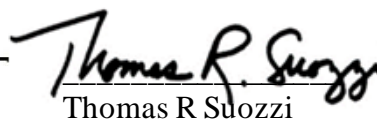

Gregory Meeks
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Alexandra Ocasio-Cortez
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⁴ Eric Kelderman. (2020). "Major Cost-Cutting Begins in Response to Covid-19, With Faculty and Staff Furloughs and Pay Cuts". *The Chronicle of Higher Education*. 18 April 2020. Accessed on 30 June 2020.