

**Federal Government Acts on Paid Leave for COVID-19**  
*By Sara C. Bachez and Elizabeth Esquivel, Governmental Relations*  
*Special Report by Bob Canavan*

On March 18, 2020, President Trump signed H.R. 6201, the Families First Coronavirus Response Act, which provides additional sick leave to employees for certain coronavirus-related reasons through the Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA), until December 31, 2020. The benefits under the Act appear to apply to employees prospectively upon the effective day of the Act, which is to be determined when it takes effect.

H.R. 6201 also provides \$1 billion in grant funding to help states manage and expand their unemployment insurance programs during the COVID-19 crisis, fund free coronavirus testing, and support enhanced food security initiatives, including Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), student meals, seniors nutrition and food banks, and additional federal funding for Medicaid.

The Administration and the Senate are now discussing a larger stimulus bill. Senate "task forces" led by Committee chairs are preparing recommendations for what could be a \$1 trillion economic stimulus package for action possibly this week.

**Key Highlights of the Stimulus Package**

A major component of the package would provide 1) \$500 billion in direct payments to individuals and households in the form of rebate checks; 2) \$300 billion for small business loans; and 3) \$200 billion in collateralized loans and loan guarantees to "severely distressed sectors" of the U.S. economy, including \$50 billion for the airline industry.

The Office of Management and Budget has also sent Congress a \$45.8 billion supplemental spending request to increase funding for dozens of federal agencies. The \$45.8 billion in emergency supplemental fiscal year 2020 funding for coronavirus response and preparedness, includes \$140 million for the Department of Education as follows:

- Provides \$100 million for Project SERV in the Safe Schools and Citizenship Education account to help K-12 schools and postsecondary institutes cover costs of cleaning and disinfecting classrooms and providing counseling and distance learning. This is almost double the \$105 million already appropriated for Fiscal Year 2020 for school safety national activities. Note: This program was originally proposed for elimination under the President's Fiscal Year 2021, consolidating its purposes into a new, smaller block grant.
- Provides \$40 million for student aid administration for increased loan servicing costs associated with the repayment relief, with no interest accruing on federal student loans beginning on March 13, 2020. There is currently \$1.8 billion appropriated for student aid administration.

- Provides \$10 million for Departmental management to expand telework at the Department of Education to 5,000 staff.

Senator Patty Murray (D-Washington State), the ranking Member of the Senate Health, Education, Labor and Pensions Committee, has introduced the “Supporting Students in Response to Coronavirus Act” to assist schools in their response to COVID 19. Senator Murray along with Senate Minority Leader Schumer (D-New York) will be pushing for their legislation to be included in the next stimulus package. Their proposal would:

- Provide resources to help schools plan for closures, including planning for how to provide meals, how to provide technology to all students, and how to ensure other educational services for students can continue.
- Support efforts to clean and sanitize educational facilities, including providing training to educators and staff on how to ensure buildings are safe for students’ return and to coordinate response efforts with public health departments.
- Ensure early childhood programs stay operational, including helping with emergency staffing needs.
- Provide emergency financial aid for college students in need of food, housing, and childcare, following abrupt school closures.
- Provide students with relief from paying back Pell Grants or repaying student loans for disrupted terms.
- Allow American students enrolled in foreign colleges abroad to continue their studies without disruption.
- Increase funding for the National Child Traumatic Stress Network, addressing stress and mental health needs associated with the spread of the virus.

Senator Murray has also urged Secretary of Education Betsy DeVos to provide clarity and guidance for school districts and institutions of higher education, families and students, following the school closures across the country due to the spread of the coronavirus.

The Administration and Senate Leaders will start work this week on putting this economic package together, which will require bi-partisan support and collaboration.

Today, Governor Gavin Newsom sent a [letter](#) to Senator Majority Leader Mitch McConnell, Senate Democratic Leader Chuck Schumer, Speaker of the House Nancy Pelosi and House Republican Leader Kevin McCarthy to request additional federal assistance to supplement California’s efforts to tackle in curving the spread of the COVID-19.

*CASBO NewsBreaks and Advocacy tools are posted on our [website](#). For more information, contact CASBO’s Governmental Relations staff: [Sara Bachez](#), Chief Governmental Relations Officer or [Elizabeth Esquivel](#), Senior Director of Policy and Governance. Remember that the most effective and convenient way to become involved is by joining CASBO [Advocacy Network](#).*

**California Association of School Business Officials**  
1001 K Street, 5th Floor | Sacramento, CA 95814 | Telephone: (916) 504-2250

