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June 23, 2021

The Honorable Miguel Cardona
Secretary
United States Department of Education
400 Maryland Ave SW
Washington, DC 20202

Dear Secretary Cardona,

The COVID-19 pandemic has shown just how important an internet connection is to everyday life. This was especially evident in the educational context, as millions of American school children saw their classes move online. Unfortunately, too many families have lacked sufficient broadband service to make effective use of distance learning tools.

Over the past year, Congress has appropriated hundreds of billions of dollars for educational relief through the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act, the Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2021, and the American Rescue Plan Act. These Acts funded programs like the Education Stabilization Fund and a series of Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief Programs, which were designed to help schools re-open safely and facilitate the move to distance learning when schools could not re-open. States and school districts had significant flexibility to allocate the funds as needed, and broadband connectivity was an eligible use.

In addition to this funding, the American Rescue Plan Act also appropriated to the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) \$7.1 billion specifically to connect students to their K-12 institutions via the FCC's E-Rate program. Given the significant amounts of money provided for educational connectivity, it is critical that federal agencies work together to avoid duplicating funding and maximizing the impact of available dollars. In April 2020, then-Chairman of the FCC Ajit Pai and then-Secretary of Education Betsy DeVos announced a joint effort to promote the use of CARES funding for remote learning.

It is imperative that Congress be aware of the amounts that have been allocated, and that both Congress and the recipient agencies ensure that these funds are distributed in a way that avoids overbuilding, duplication of funding, and wasteful spending. As these funds were subject to very few restrictions, I request that you provide a detailed accounting of how these funds have been used by federal, state, and local authorities. This includes:

1. Funds that have been provided to local educational agencies and how local educational agencies have spent the funds. Please provide details on funds used for distance or remote learning.
2. Funds that have been awarded to state educational agencies but not yet provided to local educational agencies.

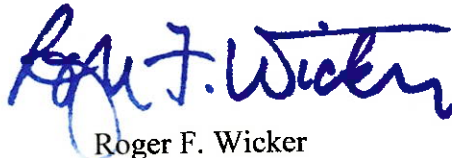
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3. Funds that remain available for state and local educational agencies.
4. Steps that the Department and your grantees at the state level have taken to coordinate with the FCC on these programs to avoid duplicative efforts and wasteful spending on these initiatives. Please detail your discussions with other federal, state, and local officials, and your efforts to maximize the appropriate use of taxpayer money.

For each of these, please provide specific dollar amounts, dates where applicable, and recipient information. For funds that have not yet been obligated, awarded, or transferred, please provide a timeline for when you anticipate these actions taking place.

Thank you for your prompt attention to this important matter. I request a response as soon as possible, but no later than July 7, 2021.

Sincerely,



Roger F. Wicker
Ranking Member
Committee on Commerce, Science,
and Transportation