



April 17, 2020

Office of Governor Tim Walz & Lt. Governor Peggy Flanagan  
 130 State Capitol  
 75 Rev Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd.  
 St. Paul, MN 55155

Dear Governor Walz and Lt. Governor Flanagan:

We write to you on behalf of several organizations supporting students who attend non-public schools across the State of Minnesota. Our organizations collectively represent 65,000 students who attend more than 450 non-public K-12 schools in Minnesota. The average size of a non-public school in Minnesota is 144 students and the median size is 90 students.

We appreciate your efforts and leadership in mitigating the impact and spread of COVID-19. The impact of COVID-19 in our state has placed a significant amount of stress on all schools.

Most non-public schools in Minnesota are small and independent, and provide not only K-12 education services, but also childcare and after-school programs for students. Our non-public schools

serve a significant number of low- and middle-income families. Unfortunately, many of our families have been hit particularly hard by the economic impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic.

As is true of public schools, Minnesota's non-public schools find themselves undertaking extraordinary efforts as a result of the pandemic and have utilized significant resources to assure continuity of educational and support services for students and families during this public health crisis. This includes purchasing technology and services to provide distance learning for students (including for families without access to the internet and technology), continuation of childcare, food assistance, and other services to families in need. As you know, all of our schools – whether they are public, charter or non-public – are an essential part of the fabric of our communities. The COVID-19 pandemic has hurt all schools and communities throughout the state.

The federal CARES Act provides governors the ability to allocate resources under a discretionary fund called the Governor's Emergency Education Relief Fund (GEER). GEER will provide financial assistance to school districts, charter schools and non-public schools, all of whom have been greatly impacted financially by COVID-19.

The U.S. Department of Education (USDE) recently released the application for states to apply for funding under GEER. USDE provided direction to states that funding must be equitable for public, charters and non-public schools. In the guidance, USDE requires states to "ensure that an LEA receiving GEER funds will provide equitable services to students and teachers in non-public schools located within the LEA in the same manner as provided under section 1117 of the ESEA."

We respectfully request that Minnesota's application include the following for students attending non-public schools:

1. Distribute GEER funding allocated to Minnesota (approximately \$43 million for the state) on a per-student allocation, focused on low-and-middle income students, for eligible expenses.
2. Minnesota has long-standing non-public pupil aid programs to distribute resources for educational materials and other expenses to non-public schools through the resident school district. Similar to this process, school districts must be required to distribute resources on an equitable basis to non-public schools for eligible expenses.
3. Eligible expenses include funding to support remote learning for all students; development of new informational and academic resources for remote learning; and expanding technological capacity including the purchasing of hardware and software; connectivity; instructional materials; and other allowable expenses.

We believe our state's educational system is strongest when we provide students and families access to the highest quality education options in public schools, charters and non-public schools. We appreciate your efforts in assisting our students to make sure we can continue supporting them and our communities across Minnesota.

Thank you for your consideration. Please contact Tim Benz at 612-532-7630 if you have any questions.

Sincerely,

Mike Fairbanks, Chairman  
White Earth Reservation

Charlie Weaver, Executive Director  
Minnesota Business Partnership

Steve Hunegs, Executive Director  
Jewish Community Relations Council of  
Minnesota and the Dakotas

Tim Benz, President  
Minnesota Independent School Forum

Jason Adkins, Executive Director  
Minnesota Catholic Conference

Gail Dorn, President  
Catholic Schools Center of Excellence

Jean Houghton, Executive Director  
Aim Higher Foundation

Anne Nickel Hage, Executive Director  
Minnesota Association of Independent Schools

Jason Slattery, Director of Catholic Education  
Archdiocese of St. Paul and Minneapolis

Rashad Turner, Executive Director  
MN Parent Union

Sean Martens, Assistant to the President  
Education & Commissioned Ministers  
Minnesota South District-LCMS

Fred Hinz, Public Policy Advocate  
Minnesota South District-LCMS

Sarah Mueller, Executive Director  
MN Nonpublic School Accrediting Association

Chas Anderson, Executive Director  
Opportunity for All Kids

Dan Beckering, Head of School  
SW Christian High School  
Association of Christian Schools

Tim Plath, Principal  
Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod  
MN Valley Lutheran School

Cynthia Zook, Superintendent  
Diocese of Duluth

Andrew Hilliker, Director of Catholic Schools  
Diocese of Crookston

Karla Cross, Director of Catholic Schools  
Diocese of New Ulm

David Fremo, Director Education Ministries  
Diocese of St. Cloud

Marcia Stenzel, Director of Catholic Education  
Diocese of Winona-Rochester

Yonis Binus, Head of School  
Heilicher Minneapolis Jewish Day School

Kevin Breen, Head of School  
Marshall School in Duluth

Elias Ali, Interim Principal  
Pioneers Academy

Ghada Al-Sadoon, Principal  
Al-Amal School

J.B. Borenstein, Executive Director  
Torah Academy

Mike Hougen, Principal  
St. Mary's Mission School

Sarah Chalich, Principal  
St. Michael's School

C: Commissioner Myron Frans, Minnesota Management & Budget  
Commissioner Mary Cathryn Ricker, Minnesota Department of Education  
Sen. Paul Gazelka, Senate Majority Leader  
Rep. Melissa Hortman, Speaker of the House  
Sen. Susan Kent, Senate Minority Leader  
Rep. Kurt Daudt, House Minority Leader