

# United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

May 15, 2020

The Honorable Mitch McConnell  
Majority Leader  
United States Senate  
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Charles Schumer  
Minority Leader  
United States Senate  
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi  
Speaker  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Kevin McCarthy  
Minority Leader  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Majority Leader McConnell, Minority Leader Schumer, Speaker Pelosi, and Minority Leader McCarthy:

Thank you for your swift, bipartisan action to respond to the health and economic impact of the novel coronavirus (COVID-19). As you prepare for a fourth economic relief package, we respectfully request **significant funding to be allocated to Federal TRIO Programs (TRIO)** to support vulnerable students and their families impacted by the virus.

COVID-19 has disrupted the learning of millions of students. From in-person classroom closures to the cancellation of essential after-school programs, students across the nation have lost invaluable and formative academic experiences. These students are missing out on more than graduation ceremonies and exams; their academic and personal lives have been destabilized, and their career prospects have been shaken. Many students are in dire need of immediate, comprehensive support during this time of academic and economic uncertainty.

Low-income students, students with disabilities, first-generation students, youth who are homeless, have limited English proficiency, and who are in foster care, students in rural communities, and military veterans—all of whom already face greater obstacles to their learning experiences are often encountering a more substantial impact from COVID-19. These students are at risk of falling through the cracks of our system and permanently losing a chance to pursue higher levels of education.

TRIO programs help ensure that these vulnerable students receive the support they need to progress through the academic pipeline. Through a set of outreach and student services programs, TRIO works to mitigate existing disparities in access and assistance for students. Their programs not only enrich individuals academically, but they also enhance our workforce's economic prospects by empowering more people to earn high school diplomas and post-secondary degrees. The assistance that TRIO program professionals can provide to these students is even more necessary during the pandemic.

A significant increase in overall program capacity would allow significantly more vulnerable students to receive support that is critical to their success and to the economy's revival, such as academic tutoring and counseling; financial literacy programs; assistance with postsecondary planning, college admissions applications, and career counseling; peer and adult mentoring;

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work-study opportunities, and connections to wrap-around services that make high school and college completion more likely.

We thank you for your support of these vital programs for our nation's most vulnerable students and their families, and we look forward to working with you on the next relief bill to ensure our most vulnerable students are supported.

Sincerely,

/s/ Jeffrey A. Merkley  
Jeffrey A. Merkley  
United States Senator

/s/ Lisa Murkowski  
Lisa Murkowski  
United States Senator

/s/ Tammy Baldwin  
Tammy Baldwin  
United States Senator

/s/ Kirsten Gillibrand  
Kirsten Gillibrand  
United States Senator

/s/ Brian Schatz  
Brian Schatz  
United States Senator

/s/ Cory A. Booker  
Cory A. Booker  
United States Senator

/s/ Mazie K. Hirono  
Mazie K. Hirono  
United States Senator

/s/ Tina Smith  
Tina Smith  
United States Senator

/s/ Sherrod Brown  
Sherrod Brown  
United States Senator

/s/ Susan M. Collins  
Susan M. Collins  
United States Senator

/s/ Jon Tester  
Jon Tester  
United States Senator

/s/ Mike Crapo  
Mike Crapo  
United States Senator

/s/ Thom Tillis  
Thom Tillis  
United States Senator

/s/ James E. Risch  
James E. Risch  
United States Senator

/s/ John Boozman  
John Boozman  
United States Senator

/s/ John Cornyn  
John Cornyn  
United States Senator

/s/ Martha McSally  
Martha McSally  
United States Senator

/s/ Richard J. Durbin  
Richard J. Durbin  
United States Senator

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/s/ Jack Reed

Jack Reed

United States Senator

/s/ Dianne Feinstein

Dianne Feinstein

United States Senator

/s/ Tim Kaine

Tim Kaine

United States Senator

/s/ Kamala D. Harris

Kamala D. Harris

United States Senator

/s/ Edward J. Markey

Edward J. Markey

United States Senator

/s/ Michael F. Bennet

Michael F. Bennet

United States Senator

/s/ Richard Blumenthal

Richard Blumenthal

United States Senator

/s/ Sheldon Whitehouse

Sheldon Whitehouse

United States Senator

/s/ Thomas R. Carper

Thomas R. Carper

United States Senator

/s/ Robert Menendez

Robert Menendez

United States Senator

/s/ Joe Manchin III

Joe Manchin III

United States Senator

/s/ Catherine Cortez Masto

Catherine Cortez Masto

United States Senator

/s/ Ron Wyden

Ron Wyden

United States Senator

/s/ Bernard Sanders

Bernard Sanders

United States Senator

/s/ Amy Klobuchar

Amy Klobuchar

United States Senator

/s/ Angus S. King, Jr.

Angus S. King, Jr.

United States Senator

/s/ Elizabeth Warren

Elizabeth Warren

United States Senator

/s/ Jacky Rosen

Jacky Rosen

United States Senator

/s/ Chris Van Hollen

Chris Van Hollen

United States Senator

/s/ Tammy Duckworth

Tammy Duckworth

United States Senator

/s/ Kyrsten Sinema

Kyrsten Sinema

United States Senator

/s/ Jeanne Shaheen

Jeanne Shaheen

United States Senator