

MEMORANDUM

TO: House Committee on Ways & Means
FROM: Jeff Fannon, Vermont-NEA Executive Director
DATE: March 27, 2020

Thank you for allowing me time to speak with you about Vermont's educators and our publicly funded school system. These last two weeks have been incredible, and we are just beginning to comprehend the effects of the corona virus on our school system, Vermonter's health, and our state's economic health. My comments here are based upon my preliminary observations and understandings of certain aspects of the pandemic.

I'll be brief, but I would be remiss if I didn't inform you of the great work educators—administrators, teachers, and supports staff—are undertaking since the Governor closed schools on March 18. Everyone has stepped up to feed students by making and delivering meals and figuring out which families need food or childcare. And while the Governor has now closed schools through the end of the 2019-20 school year, meals will still be provided and educators will still educate Vermont's children, albeit in a remote learning environment.

As for the economics of the pandemic, it isn't pretty, as you know—upwards of a \$40 million hole in this year's education fund. The feds, however, may provide monies to offset the hit to the education fund. The attached NEA document outlines all of the contours of the federal Coronavirus Aid, Relief and Economic Security (CARES) Act and all of the economic supports. It is a massive package that is likely to pass the US House today. The President said he would sign the law immediately.

Administrators and school employees are devoted to their students and are working to do what is in their students' best interest. Likewise, I believe the 12 communities that have yet to vote on their schools' budgets and the 9 communities that need to re-vote their budget after not passing on Town Meeting Day will do the right thing and support their local community schools.

I am well aware of the economic challenges we face because of this health pandemic. I am happy to answer your questions.