

March 24, 2020

Senate Majority Leader McConnell
317 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Speaker Pelosi
1236 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515-0512

Senate Minority Leader Schumer
322 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510-3202

House Minority Leader McCarthy
2468 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515-0523

Dear Congressional Leaders:

As Congress focuses on addressing the public health and economic crisis created by the COVID-19 pandemic, we urge you to make sure that the response to the crisis does not exacerbate other known health and economic risks.

The operations, infrastructure, and supply chains, and most importantly, the staff, faculty, and students of thousands of higher education institutions around the country are directly affected by this global crisis. Our organizational members have long, productive histories addressing systemic environmental problems facing the world, and driving solutions to these problems through the research and new knowledge produced at their institutions. This includes shifting higher education practices and supporting policies that improve the well-being of all citizens, communities, and economies.

One way to accelerate an overall economic recovery is to increase investments in the country's transition to a zero-carbon economy and in higher education as an important sector that helps accelerate this transition. This transition will be one of the largest opportunities for economic growth in decades, not only for the clean energy economy, but also for sectors that underpin the training and education required to support these types of systemic solutions - educational infrastructure, healthcare, and other programs - are just as important.

As you consider legislation to respond to the economic impact of the novel coronavirus, we encourage you to consider the following principles:

1. Develop a stimulus package to address the needs of colleges and universities along with their critical research and small business components.
2. Do not add additional subsidies to polluting energy sources in the U.S. and instead transition our energy investments into clean and resilient energy solutions including retooling and retraining programs to support a 21st century clean energy workforce.
3. Focus low carbon and clean economy investments on underserved rural and urban communities and small businesses - these communities are being hit the hardest by the associated economic crisis and need the most assistance.
4. Focus on research, demonstration, education, training, and deployment of zero-carbon energy and other low carbon technologies and practices.
5. Tie the significant bailouts of industries to requirements to become more energy efficient, reduce carbon pollution, and adopt clean technology solutions.

6. Ensure that money that you do inject into the economy supports an education and knowledge infrastructure targeted towards the education and training of a workforce skilled to embrace low carbon technologies.

We are already witnessing the impacts of climate change on the health and financial wellbeing of our higher education institutions and communities. In any stimulus package or other legislation to address the novel coronavirus, we ask that you ensure that higher education can continue to deliver the innovation and educational resources necessary to drive the clean economy forward and does not encourage an increase in greenhouse gas emissions. We also encourage you, where possible to enact legislation to incentivize clean energy and greenhouse gas reductions to lower the serious health and economic risks from climate change. We believe it is imperative not to react to one global health and economic crisis by greatly increasing the risk and impact of another.

Thank you for your leadership and please do not hesitate to reach out with any questions.

Sincerely,

APPA – Leadership in Educational Facilities
Association for the Advancement of Sustainability in Higher Education
National Council for Science and the Environment
Intentional Endowments Network
Second Nature
The Society for College and University Planning
U.S. Partnership for Education for Sustainable Development