



Working for You

Legislative news and information

January 26, 2021

On January 21, President Biden released an actionable plan across the federal government to address the COVID-19 pandemic, including 12 initial executive actions that were issued by President Biden during his first two days in office. To execute on the national strategy, the White House will establish a COVID-19 Response Office responsible for coordinating the pandemic response across all federal departments and agencies.

AESA applauds the clear, strong and decisive direction being demonstrated on Day One of the Biden Administration. This is a much-needed step forward in a coordinated response to the ongoing pandemic and will help to alleviate some of the downward pressure and decision making that was placed upon local leaders to date.

Specific to the plan's education-related elements, we are pleased to see many of the following items:

- A focus on K-12 education funding;
- Restoring the FEMA reimbursement for schools;
- A national testing strategy that supports school screening testing programs and provides clear, unified approach and technical assistance for testing in schools;
- Updated public health guidance on containment and mitigation measures that provides metrics for schools to measure and monitor the incidence and prevalence of COVID-19 as well as updated guidance on physical distancing protocols, and contact tracing in schools;
- A national strategy for safely reopening schools, including requiring ED and HHS to provide guidance on safe reopening and operating, and to develop a Safer Schools and Campuses Best Practices Clearinghouse to share lessons learned and best practices from across the country;
- Pushing the FCC to support student connectivity in their homes.

This direct responsiveness to practitioner feedback is critical and demonstrates that the Biden Administration, is serious in its priority of opening schools in its first 100 days, recognizes that the ultimate work and responsibility of opening schools lies with local school system leaders and that as such, their voice, insights, and recommendations should be reflected in any nation-wide plan. We look forward to working with the Biden administration, welcome the confirmation of Education Secretary nominee Miguel Cardona, and stand ready to support the important work of safely opening the nation's schools.