

House Republicans demand bipartisan probe into Covid-19 effects on students with disabilities Print

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House Republicans are calling on Democratic committee leaders to launch a probe into how school closures are affecting students with disabilities and whether schools are abiding by federal disability law.

Reps. [Steve Scalise](#) (R-La.), [James Comer](#) (R-Ky.), [Virginia Foxx](#) (R-N.C.) and [Cathy McMorris Rodgers](#) (R-Wash.) asked House Democrats to “put children over unions and science over politics” to reopen schools.

In a letter sent Monday, they urged House Democrats to issue an oversight request to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and the National Institutes of Health for data on the experiences of special education programs that are open for in-person learning. They also want the CDC and NIH to study the impact of Covid-19 on children with disabilities.

“Unfortunately, students with disabilities are falling behind,” the GOP lawmakers wrote. “States and localities are not meeting even the minimal requirements. We are hearing from parents across the U.S. whose children with disabilities are bearing the greatest burden as schools remain closed.”

The letter was addressed to House Oversight Chair [Carolyn Maloney](#) (D-N.Y.), Energy and Commerce Chair [Frank Pallone](#) (D-N.J.), Education and Labor Chair [Bobby Scott](#) (D-Va.) and Coronavirus Crisis Subcommittee Chair [Jim Clyburn](#) (D-S.C.).

Scott “is equally concerned about the impact the pandemic has had on students with disabilities,” an Education and Labor Committee aide said in a statement to POLITICO. They added that Scott supports [the American Rescue Plan](#) “which will invest nearly \$130 billion in safely reopening schools, including \$3 billion in new funding for the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act.”

“If Republicans want to support students with disabilities, they should vote in favor of the American Rescue Plan,” they wrote.

The letter outlined stories from parents discussing the frustrations their children faced while attending virtual school during the pandemic. Parents described their children feeling isolated, having to pay thousands of dollars for extra support and districts not accommodating their children as disability law requires.

House Republicans also expressed their disappointment with how the “Biden administration is not more forcefully recommending schools open because the science is clear.”

“Getting all children back to full time, in-person instruction, especially those with special needs and disabilities, must be a bipartisan priority,” they wrote. “If states or localities are violating federal civil rights laws to the detriment of students, they must be investigated, and their actions corrected.”

Key context: House Republicans have launched an all-out push to reopen schools by pressing House Democratic committee leaders to hold hearings on reopening schools over the last month.

They’ve also asked CDC Director Rochelle Walensky to reconsider [the agency’s most comprehensive guidance](#) released on reopening

schools, and have pressed the Council of Chief State School Officers to provide best practices for quickly reopening schools.

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