

# Biden pitches \$170B in Covid relief for education

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A teacher wears a mask and teaches remotely from her classroom. | Michael Loccisano/Getty Images

President-elect Joe Biden is calling on Congress to pass an additional \$170 billion in pandemic relief funding for education, the vast majority of which will be aimed at getting schools to safely reopen.

The proposal was part of a [broader \\$1.9 trillion package](#) that Biden released ahead of a prime-time speech on Thursday in which he'll call on Congress to pass another Covid relief bill.

The additional funding would supplement roughly \$82 billion for education that Congress included in December in the last round of coronavirus relief, which the Education Department has begun making available in the last several days. The CARES Act last March provided nearly \$31 billion for education.

Biden’s plan describes the influx of additional resources for schools as “the necessary investments to meet the president-elect’s goal of safely reopening a majority of K-8 schools in the first 100 days.”

The proposal calls for structuring the education relief in three major buckets, similar to how Congress has divided up each of the last two coronavirus relief laws.

**Reopening K-12 schools:** The bulk of Biden’s plan seeks \$130 billion to help K-12 schools address disruptions caused by the pandemic.

Schools would be able to use the money for a wide range of purposes, including reducing class sizes, improving ventilation, buying PPE, making up for lost learning and other support measures for students.

It’s not clear exactly how the funding would be doled out to schools. Congress previously has allocated funding largely based on population of Title I students, and lawmakers have sparred repeatedly over how much money to send to private schools.

Biden’s plan says he will push for “provisions to ensure states adequately fund education and protect students in low-income communities that have been hardest hit by COVID-19.”

**Higher ed:** Biden’s plan proposes \$35 billion for higher education. The funding would be “directed” at public colleges and universities as well as private historically Black colleges and other minority-serving institutions.

Those colleges could use the funding to expand public health protocols and distance learning. The money would also be used to provide emergency grants directly to students. The Biden transition team said the money would allow millions of students to receive up to an additional \$1,700 in financial assistance from their college.

**More money for governors:** Biden is also seeking \$5 billion that would be at the discretion of governors to use to address the educational needs, at any level, in their state as a result of the pandemic.

**What’s missing:** Biden’s sweeping coronavirus relief plan does not include any student loan forgiveness, which has been a priority for progressives and many Democrats on Capitol Hill.

Biden has called on Congress to cancel \$10,000 of federal student loan debt per borrower, a proposal that his top economic adviser reiterated last week.

A senior Biden transition official told reporters on Thursday that Biden “continues to support that legislative proposal, though it’s not in this package.”

The official said that “in the immediate rescue context, his focus is on extending forbearance,” referring to an [announcement last week](#) that Biden would use executive action to continue the Education Department’s pause on monthly payments and interest for most federal borrowers. That relief is otherwise set to expire on Jan. 31.

Biden’s team hasn’t said how long their extension of that student loan relief would last.

*Megan Cassella contributed to this report.*

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