



**Congress of the United States**  
**House of Representatives**  
Washington, DC 20515

February 24, 2021

Carolyn Stanford Taylor, State Superintendent  
Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction  
125 S. Webster Street  
Madison, WI 53703

Dear Superintendent Stanford Taylor,

I write to seek greater clarity on Wisconsin's use of Education Stabilization Fund resources, particularly the Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief Fund (ESSER). As Congress is considering further coronavirus relief funding to reopen schools it is important to know how previous relief funding has been spent.

The CARES Act (P.L. 116-136) provided \$13.2 billion to ESSER in March 2020. According to the Department of Education Wisconsin received a total allocation of \$174 million of which at least \$157 million had to go to local education agencies (LEAs)<sup>1</sup>. In the December the Consolidated Appropriations Act (P.L. 116-260) allocated another \$54.3 billion to ESSER. Wisconsin's allocation of that funding was \$686 million of which \$617 million must go to LEAs<sup>2</sup>.

Most of the funding provided to schools to deal with the impacts of COVID-19 remains unspent. From that data I have reviewed less than 50% of the original CARES Act funding Wisconsin received has been spent. This raises numerous questions as Congress is considering an additional \$128.5 billion dollars in funding to ESSER. I strongly support reopening our schools safely and want to ensure that funds are being spent effectively. Please provide answers to the following:

- Why has there been such a delay in LEAs using the funds they have been allocated?
- Are the uses of the funding too restrictive?
- Are reporting requirements the cause for the lag in spending information?
- What can we do to ensure these funds are being spent to safely reopen schools more quickly?
- Have schools that reopened for in-person learning been given priority for funding?
- Has the second round of ESSER funding, \$617 million for Wisconsin, begun to be spent yet? If not do you have any estimation of when those funds will be used?

Researchers from the Centers for Disease Control published a report citing research from Wisconsin that stated, "There has been little evidence that schools have contributed meaningfully to increased

<sup>1</sup> <https://oese.ed.gov/files/2020/04/ESSER-Fund-State-Allocations-Table.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> [https://oese.ed.gov/files/2021/01/Final\\_ESSERII\\_Methodology\\_Table\\_1.5.21.pdf](https://oese.ed.gov/files/2021/01/Final_ESSERII_Methodology_Table_1.5.21.pdf)

community transmission.”<sup>3</sup> According to another study published in the *New England Journal of Medicine*, “[u]ntil [...] children physically return to school full time, many will lose out on essential educational, social, and developmental benefits; neither the economy nor the health care system will be able to return to full strength given parents’ caretaking responsibilities; and profound racial and socioeconomic injustices will be further exacerbated. We believe that safely reopening schools full-time for all elementary school children should therefore be a top national priority.”<sup>4</sup> Our kids need to be back in the classroom.

Thank you again for your work on this important issue. Please do not hesitate to contact us if you would like to discuss this issue further.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "B. Steil".

Bryan Steil  
Member of Congress

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<sup>3</sup> <https://jamanetwork.com/journals/jama/fullarticle/2775875>

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.nejm.org/doi/full/10.1056/NEJMms2024920>