



Sunday, December 20, 2020

I. Policy Intelligence and Education News

- **State of play on government funding, FY 2021 appropriations, and COVID-relief** – Congressional leaders today announced that they have finalized an agreement on a package that provides both COVID-relief and full fiscal year (FY) 2021 funding for the 12 federal appropriations bills. Because the two-day extension of current government funding expires at midnight tonight, Congress is passing a new one-day extension that will go through midnight tomorrow (Monday). That means that tomorrow, both chambers need to pass the legislation (possibly one bill that has the Defense, Homeland Security, Commerce-Justice-Science, and Financial Services bills and another that combines the remaining 8 appropriations bills and the COVID bill) and the President needs to sign it to keep government funding going as of Tuesday morning, or else there will have to be another extension of government funding to allow time for the bills to be passed and signed by the President. None of the legislative text has been posted yet, but we expect it will be on the Rules Committee website by tomorrow morning. We'll send out a short Update tomorrow with links to the legislative text and report language once it's available, and will send around CEF's usual 4-page funding table and analysis as soon as we have it done.
- **What the COVID-relief bill includes for education** – While there isn't yet any public information about the FY 2021 Labor-HHS-Education funding bill, House Speaker Nancy Pelosi and Senate Minority Leader Schumer issued a [joint statement on the coronavirus relief and omnibus agreement](#) that includes key components (Republicans do not appear to have published materials yet). For education and related funding, the package is similar but not identical to the bipartisan proposal released on Tuesday that was described in the CEF Update on 12.15.20. This package provides substantially more education support than the CARES Act provided in March, but far less than was included in either version of the House-passed Heroes Act or the Senate's proposed HEALS Act. The funding total is far, far less than various sectors of the education community have said is needed to respond to increased costs and lower revenues as a result of the pandemic. Based on the summary materials we have seen, the package provides less for governors and more for higher education than the bipartisan proposal. The reported details are listed below.
 - **\$82 billion for Education Relief Funds** that are similar to the funds in the CARES Act (the CARES Act provided a total of \$30.75 billion for these funds):
 - **\$818.8 million for outlying areas and Bureau of Indian Affairs schools.**
 - **\$4.05 billion for a Governors Emergency Relief Fund**, with money set aside for private K-12 schools (the bipartisan bill set aside \$2.5 billion of a larger \$7.5 billion allocation for governors).

- **\$54.3 billion for an Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief Fund.**
- **\$22.7 billion for a Higher Education Emergency Relief Fund**, broken out as follows:
 - **\$20 billion for non-profit (public and private) institutions of higher education (IHEs);**
 - **\$908 million for financial aid for students at for-profit colleges;**
 - **\$1.7 billion for HBCUs, minority-serving institutions, and tribal colleges*;**
 - **\$113.5 million for IHEs with greatest unmet need** and for graduate institutions and others not covered by the previous formulas.
- ***\$1.34 billion in relief to discharge previous loans made to HBCUs** (I believe this is separate from the funding listed above but I'm not sure – we'll know when see legislative text).
- **Expands Pell grant eligibility** – House Education and Labor Committee chair [Bobby Scott \(D-VA\)](#) described these provisions as does [Senate HELP Committee Ranking Member Patty Murray \(D-WA\)](#). More students will be eligible for larger awards, but it does not increase the maximum award (that is something I'd expect to see tomorrow in the FY 2021 Labor-HHS-Education funding bill). It restores Pell grant eligibility to formerly incarcerated people and for those defrauded by their school. It also simplifies the FAFSA – a long-held goal of the retiring Senate HELP Committee chairman Lamar Alexander (R-TN) that likely would have been included in a reauthorization of the Higher Education Act if one had been enacted this year.
- **\$10 billion for child care** through the Child Care and Development Block Grant (CCDBG) program. Funds will help support providers and families (the CARES Act provided \$3.5 billion for child care).
- **\$250 million for Head Start** (less than the \$750 million for Head Start in the CARES Act. I remain very surprised that Head Start hasn't received more funding in the relief proposals).
- **\$7 billion for broadband**, including \$3.2 billion for what sounds like it could be support for the e-rate program “for low-income families to access broadband through an FCC fund” (from the press release). There is also a \$1 billion tribal broadband fund, \$300 million for a new grant program to fund broadband in rural areas, and other funding for telehealth and broadband infrastructure. The earlier bipartisan proposal included \$3 billion for e-rate, \$6.2 billion for connectivity, including remote learning, and \$200 million for the Institute for Museum and Library Services to purchase internet-connected devices for low-income and rural communities, so today's bill might be modeled on that but I can't be sure yet.