

Affiliated Jurisdictions:

Agudath Israel of America	Lutheran Schools Partnership
Association of Christian Schools International	Archdiocese of Indianapolis
Christian Schools International	Diocese of Evansville
Indiana Association of Independent Schools	Diocese of Fort Wayne -South Bend
Indiana Conference of Seventh-day Adventists	Diocese of Lafayette
Lutheran Church Missouri Synod	Diocese of Gary

The Honorable Eric Holcomb
Governor of Indiana
Indiana Statehouse
200 W. Washington Street
Indianapolis, IN 46204

Dear Governor Holcomb,

On behalf of the nearly 90,000 students educated in Indiana's non-public schools, we are writing to thank you for your leadership during this unprecedented time and to ask for your support as ALL schools are facing significant challenges caused by the recent pandemic.

Indiana has a long history of a private – public partnership in educating Hoosier children. Like our public school colleagues, Indiana's non-public schools have provided our state a multitude of successful graduates who play key leadership roles in all employment sectors, including government, business, health care, and education. COVID -19 has placed many entities in extremely challenging financial situations, and it is our hope to be a vital part of the Indiana spirit of resiliency as we successfully emerge from these troubled times.

In that spirit, we would like to share three areas of concern for non-public schools. First, as our schools continue to navigate the educational challenges posed by the pandemic, all schools are in need of funding for technology, professional development, and safety measures (e.g., PPE and school sanitizing). As you are aware, on March 27, President Trump signed into law the CARES Act which included education stabilization funding. Both the Governor's Emergency Education Relief Fund and the Elementary and Secondary School Relief Fund included equitable participation language for non-public schools.

On April 30, the U.S. Department of Education (USDOE) issued guidance on how the equitable share allocation for non-public schools should be calculated. As you are aware, Dr. McCormick has decided to ignore that guidance and instead instructed LEAs to use the Title I allocation approach. This decision reduces the non-public school equitable share from \$15 million to \$4 million dollars. As an emergency relief program, we contend - as does USDOE - that it was intended to support as many schools and students as possible. Using Dr. McCormick's Title I approach leaves many non-public schools with no support because of the way Title I allocations are determined. For instance, because many school districts focus their Title I programs at the elementary level, many non-public high schools are automatically eliminated from CARES funding support in Indiana. This allocation issue is still being debated at the federal level with Secretary DeVos releasing a letter to state superintendents reaffirming the guidance with the intent of elevating the guidance to "rule". She also suggested that states keep the funding difference for non-public schools in escrow. It does not appear that advice will be heeded here

in Indiana as well. We would be happy to discuss further the importance of both the ESSER and GEER funds to non-public school relief efforts with your staff.

Our second concern deals with schools re-opening. It is our hope that any state guidance allows the flexibility needed at the local level to address the state's varying geography, school size and composition. As non-public schools, we are small businesses where parents pay for a product/service, and the vast majority of our families want their children back in a traditional in-school delivery model in the fall. As such, Indiana's non-public schools value community and relationships as a cornerstone of our success with and for young people. Our parents will not continue to pay for something they perceive as "less than." If schools lose a significant number of families, it will no doubt impact their long-term viability and jeopardize the well-earned recognition Indiana has as a parental choice state.

Please know that we are strongly committed to providing educational settings with appropriate safety protocols in place, but we need the flexibility to approach opening schools in a way that best meets the needs of our students and the mission of our schools.

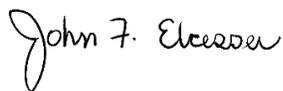
Finally, we have no doubt that many families will continue to experience financial stress as we move out of this crisis that will impact a families' ability to pay tuition. It is our hope that there may be some flexibility and support through Indiana's Choice programs. Streamlining the complicated eligibility process for Choice scholarships (vouchers) may make it possible for families to keep their children in the schools of their choice, even with a loss of income. As we dialogue with colleagues from around the country, we are hoping to navigate the challenges better here in Indiana because of current policies and programs (e.g., Indiana School Choice Scholarship Program, Indiana Tax Credit Scholarship Program) that understand and support the philosophy of parental choice. It is our hope that our current policies and programs be expanded at this time to benefit even more families in their time of need.

In closing, we are grateful that Indiana has been a leader in the approach to the coronavirus pandemic, and this is in great part due to your leadership. We have no doubt that we will end up in an even better place on the other side of the pandemic. How could we not? We are Hoosiers...and as you so eloquently have echoed, we ARE in this together!

We would be happy to discuss any of our concerns further with you and/or your staff.

Thanks for all you do!

All the best,



John F. Elcesser
Executive Director
Indiana Non-Public Education Association



Daryl C. Hagan, Ed.D.
President, INPEA Board of Directors
Superintendent of Schools, Diocese of Evansville

CC: Katie Jenner