

Good afternoon Chairman Scott, ranking member Foxx, and members of the Education & Labor committee. My name is Eric Gordon, Chief Executive Officer of the Cleveland Metropolitan School District in Cleveland, Ohio. I am also proud to serve as the co-chair of the Ohio Urban 8 Coalition and as chair of the Council of the Great City Schools.

The Cleveland Metropolitan School District (CMSD) is the second largest school district in Ohio with an enrollment of nearly 38,000 students. With over 42% of Cleveland's children living below the poverty line, Cleveland has the highest child poverty rate of any major city in the country. With a median household income of just over \$26,000, Cleveland residents often lack basic necessities considered essential in today's America. Our school community is 86% children of color. Over 17% of our students are English Language Learners and nearly a quarter of our students are identified for special education services. Nearly 5% of our students, over 1,900 students, are identified as homeless on any given day.

Despite these and other inequities, CMSD has gone from being the worst performing school district in Ohio to becoming one of Ohio's fastest-improving districts.

On March 13, Ohio Governor Mike DeWine ordered the necessary closing of Ohio's schools due to the COVID-19 public health emergency. This had a significant impact on students across Ohio.

While my peers in more affluent districts in Ohio focused on switching from classroom to online instruction, the reality is more than 40% of our families had no reliable access to high-speed internet in their homes and that 68% of our families had no device other than a smart phone to even access the Internet.

CMSD operated 22 grab-and-go meal sites. We also established homework hotlines, delivered content that could be accessed by cell phone, like posting lessons on Instagram, created weekly grade-level learning packages, along with supplemental packages to support students with disabilities and English language learners and to support social emotional health, which we mailed to each child's home, created lessons to broadcast on local TV stations and established social-emotional health hotlines for those who were experiencing high stress, feelings of isolation, or signs of neglect.

Over the shutdown period, we froze spending across the district to direct all available funds toward the purchase and distribution of over 9,000 hotspots with a one-year subscription to the Internet and over 16,000 devices. Those devices and hotspots, which are now in place and will remain distributed throughout the summer, ensure that my families are now able to apply for unemployment, to apply for jobs, to access medical care through telehealth, and to access other essential supports afforded to most Americans.

The inequities my families faced during this public health emergency have existed in my community and in communities across the country for decades and it's important to note that these inequities are most acute in communities of color.

Addressing these needs and preparing to return to school to address nine weeks of lost learning time, and to create a more fair, just, and good system of personalized, mastery learning must also be done within the context of the looming budget crisis brought on by the economic recession. In my district, we are facing the very real threat of losing up to \$127 million in state and local revenue in the year ahead. That's nearly 25% of my district's net operating budget. If this worst case scenario were to occur, I will have no choice but to make deep, devastating cuts to my district this coming winter and to implement those cuts

for the second semester and it will essentially wipe out the 10 years of growth my team and I have generated in Cleveland. I have already received a \$5.6 million budget cut from my educational state aid this year.

I urge Congress to provide the necessary resources to keep our nation's school districts intact during the economic crisis that arose from this public health emergency. While this includes resources contemplated in the HEROES Act and future stimulus and stabilization acts, it must also include additional resources in the years ahead to ensure adequate funding for America's most vulnerable children, including Title I-A for disadvantaged and at-risk youth, Title I-D for children who have been the victims of neglect, Title III for immigrant children, IDEA-B for students with learning disabilities, and the McKinney-Vento Act for homeless and foster youth, as school districts like mine work to recover the learning time that was lost for the most fragile among our youth.

Chairman Scott, ranking member Foxx and members of the Education & Labor committee, on behalf of the 38,000 students of the Cleveland Metropolitan School District who I have the privilege of serving, along with the 192,000 students of the Ohio Urban 8 Coalition and the 8.2 million students of the Council of the Great City Schools, I thank you for your time.