



## Too Little, Too Late: Breaking Down the Senate GOP HEALS Act

### *No Relief for State and Local Governments*

The *HEALS Act* offers no relief for state and local governments, which will be forced to make deep cuts to education and public services without federal support.

- Because state and local governments must balance their budgets each year, the COVID-19 pandemic is forcing them to consider deep and painful cuts to education, public safety, and other vital services due to large budget shortfalls.
  - State governments, alone, face a nearly \$600 billion budget shortfall over the next three years.
- In contrast to the *Heroes Act*, which provided nearly \$1 trillion in state and local relief, the *HEALS Act* **provides no relief for state and local governments.**

### *Inadequate Relief for Students and Schools*

The *HEALS Act* offers K-12 schools only a fraction of the funding they need to reopen safely, and conditions two-thirds of that funding on schools physically reopening, regardless of local public health risks. The bill:

- Provides just \$70 billion in funding for K-12 schools, compared to the nearly \$200 billion passed by House Democrats through the *Heroes Act* and the *Moving Forward Act*, and includes **no state and local budget relief** to help prevent cuts to public education funding.
- Conditions two-thirds of the K-12 funding on schools physically reopening, regardless of local public health risks, forcing schools to choose between relief funding they desperately need and the health of students, school staff, and their families.
- Diverts emergency aid to wealthy private schools already benefitting from PPP and uses a global health crisis to advance Secretary DeVos's long-sought-after voucher program that has been repeatedly rejected by Congress.
- Offers a liability shield for schools that disregard health and safety guidelines and endanger students and families by ignoring local public health experts.

The *HEALS Act* fails to provide meaningful relief for institutions of higher education – which are facing an unprecedented budget crisis – and federal student loan borrowers, many of whom continue to face severe financial hardship. The bill:

- Provides \$29 billion for institutions of higher education, compared to \$37 billion in the *Heroes Act*, and includes **no state and local budget relief** to help prevent cuts to public education funding.

- Fails to extend the pause on payments and interest for federal student loan borrowers, which is due to expire at the end of September.
  - Instead, the *HEALS Act* seeks to amend the *Higher Education Act* by creating a new and less generous income driven repayment plan, which would not benefit most students and would take years to implement
- Offers a liability shield for schools that disregard health and safety guidelines and endanger students and families by ignoring local public health experts.

***The HEALS Act does not put a single dollar towards addressing the child hunger crisis, but it includes nearly \$2 billion for a new FBI Headquarters near President Trump’s hotel and a tax break for corporate executives who dine on expense accounts.***

- Unlike the *Heroes Act*, the Senate Republicans’ bill offers no solutions to help school meal programs on the verge of collapse and does nothing to help prevent child hunger at a moment when children are experiencing food insecurity at five times the pre-COVID rate.

***The HEALS Act leaves children, families, and child care providers without a plan to save the child care sector from imminent collapse. The bill:***

- Provides such limited funding for child care stabilization that it simply shifts the collapse of this sector 30 days into the future.
- Fails to protect families from the cost burden of child care at a time when they most need help.

### ***Endangers Workers’ Safety and Abandons Essential Workers***

***Despite tens of thousands of worker infections and the deaths of thousands of essential workers due to workplace COVID-19 infections, the HEALS Act provides no workplace safety protections and even offers corporations near-total immunity for endangering workers’ safety. The bill:***

- Fails to protect our nation’s workers by requiring the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) to issue a long overdue Emergency Temporary Standard (ETS).
  - By contrast, the House-passed *Heroes Act* directs OSHA to issue an ETS that would require employers to develop infection control plans, implement controls to prevent exposure, and provide personal protective equipment that would protect workers from contracting COVID-19 at work.
- Forces workers to return to unsafe workplaces by largely exempting employers from OSHA enforcement – including by state OSHA plans – for COVID-19 related violations except in the most extreme cases of employer misconduct.

***The HEALS Act does nothing to increase paychecks for essential workers on the frontlines of the pandemic, expand paid leave during a health crisis, or protect the financial security of more than a million retirees. The bill:***

- Fails to include any funds to support premium pay for essential frontline workers, compared to the *Heroes Act*, which created a nearly \$200 billion Heroes Fund to increase pay for essential workers.
- Fails to expand emergency paid family, medical, and sick leave benefits to millions of workers, including health care workers and first responders.

- Does not address the multiemployer pensions crisis that is threatening workers, retirees, employers, local communities, and our economy.

### ***Fails to Invest in Health Care During a Global Pandemic***

***The HEALS Act does nothing to make health care more accessible and affordable during a public health crisis and underfunds the testing and contact tracing efforts that are necessary to control the virus. The bill:***

- Provides just \$16 billion in new funding for testing and contact tracing, compared to the \$75 billion provided under the *Heroes Act*.
- Fails to make treatment for COVID-19 affordable or available to patients without out-of-pocket costs.
  - In contrast, the *Heroes Act* requires coverage for free treatment related to COVID-19 across all forms of both private and public health coverage, including employer-sponsored plans, which cover more than 150 million workers and their families.
- Provides no financial support to help workers and their families afford to maintain their health coverage when they are furloughed or laid off and must access COBRA.
  - In contrast, the *Heroes Act* provides 100 percent subsidies to workers who lose their job, experience a reduction in hours, or are furloughed by their employer.
- Exempts insurance companies and health plans sponsored by large corporations from crucial consumer protections related to telehealth coverage, including protections against unreasonable premium increases, consumer appeal rights, and prohibitions on annual or lifetime limits.