

Put Students First Act of 2021 *Senator Marco Rubio (R-FL)*

President Biden has committed to reopen schools within his first 100 days as president. Despite this commitment, the Biden Administration claims that an extravagant infusion of \$130 billion is necessary for schools to reopen safely, despite reports demonstrating that K-12 schools are not significant drivers of COVID-19 transmission when reasonable measures such as masking and social distancing are practiced. Despite strong evidence indicating that schools can and should reopen safely, a number of teachers' unions are pushing back with unreasonable timeline requests. Notably, certain unions are demanding conditions be met that would not allow schools to be reopened until 2022, if ever.

Experts agree that school closures are incredibly detrimental to students' wellbeing. A growing body of scientific research is clear: the best thing we can do for students is get them back into the classroom.

The *Put Students First Act of 2021*:

- **Prohibition of federal education funds for K-12 schools that do not reopen:** This bill mandates that the Secretary of Education cannot provide any federal education dollars to schools that do not provide an in-person learning option by April 30, 2021.
 - Schools that do not reopen, and have already received FY21 and/or COVID-19 relief dollars, they would be required to return these funds. This provision would apply to any future infusions of COVID-19 relief dollars being currently debated by Congress.
- **Use of forfeited and returned funds:** Following the return or forfeiture of funds, states in which schools closed for in-person learning would have fifteen days to submit a plan to the Department of Education for how to use those funds to support school choice options for students impacted by school closures.
- **Grants to states with highest percentage of schools offering in-person instruction:** If a state with shuttered schools chooses not to offer school choice options to their students, those funds would then be granted to states with the highest percentage of local education agencies in the state serving schools that offer in-person instruction.
- **Child nutrition:** Nothing in this Act would alter or preclude any eligibility, funding, or requirements related to the National School Lunch Program.