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Council of the Great City Schools

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FOR RELEASE

March 11, 2022

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Council Celebrates One-Year Anniversary of the American Rescue Plan

WASHINGTON, March 11 – One year ago today, March 11, 2021, the American Rescue Plan (ARP) was signed into law. In the wake of the Covid-19 pandemic, the American Rescue Plan has been a financial lifeline for the nation’s urban schools. ARP provided more than \$40 billion in supplemental funding to the 77 member school districts that represent the Council of the Great City Schools, as part of the \$122.8 billion provided under the Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief (ESSER) Fund. This historic infusion of federal funds helped the nation’s schools reopen safely while providing a significant opportunity for urban educators to improve student outcomes and address unfinished learning stemming from pandemic disruptions.

Urban school districts utilized federal funding in a variety of ways, such as providing life-saving vaccines and Covid-19 mitigation programs, expanding after-school and summer programming, funding a variety of instructional enhancements in professional development, and increasing social and emotional supports to respond to the urgent mental health needs caused by the Covid-19 crisis. Examples include the following:

As a result of ARP funding, Orange County Public Schools in Orlando, Fla., will be able to utilize additional positions/resources to address unfinished learning and improve student achievement. Some examples include: additional Tier I Intervention teachers in the district’s highest need schools – currently 500+ hired to support student learning within the core curriculum, extra English Language Arts and Algebra 1 teachers to support a modified teacher schedule, Algebra 1 and geometry student acceleration summer camps, mental health counselors at every school for teachers and students, and a social worker added at every elementary school.

To support student learning, the Los Angeles Unified School District utilized ARP funds to provide equity-driven, per-pupil funding to schools based on student needs, expand summer school and enrichment programming to all students, and create a robust program of intensive support for elementary school students to ensure a strong foundation in literacy and numeracy. In addition, the nation’s second largest school district used ARP funds to invest in the Black Student Achievement Plan to better and more holistically address Black student needs, hire more mental health specialists and create more outdoor education and improved green spaces on campuses.

ARP funds will enable Ohio's Columbus Public Schools to provide a counselor in every school by the fall of 2022. Ohio's largest school system, with 50,000 students, is also utilizing federal funds to employ literacy support specialists in every school, bilingual engagement liaisons, and vulnerable youth advocates.

Tennessee's Memphis-Shelby County Schools is using federal funding to provide technology and tutoring sessions to children before, during and after the school day. Funds are also being used to replace all water fountains districtwide with 3,000 new, filtered, water bottle filling stations and hire specialized education assistants in the classroom to support teachers and help keep students engaged.

Tulsa Public Schools used recovery funding to provide summer learning and enrichment for more than 10,000 students in grades pre-K-12. The district's Ready.Set.Summer! program created much-needed opportunities for children to reconnect and re-engage with their peers and teachers. And as the district started the 2021-2022 school year, recovery funds supported the implementation of virtual tutoring with real-time one-on-one support for students in all grades.

New York's Rochester City School District is using ARP funds to create an environment where all students have access to and engage in high quality teaching and learning. Using \$9.5 million dollars of the district's allocation, high-quality instructional materials have been acquired and programming has been expanded, student instructional technology has been improved, and staff are engaging in impactful professional learning. Funds are also being used to implement a Social Emotional Learning curriculum, expand career and technical education offerings, and hire additional staff for arts and physical education.

Big-city school systems are also being transparent and demonstrating good stewardship of the federal funds they have received by seeking input from students, staff, and community stakeholders on how ARP funds should be used over the next three years. Districts have used that input to develop plans for how to properly manage and allocate the funds in ways that most effectively address student needs.

For example, the nation's fifth largest school system, Nevada's Clark County School District in Las Vegas, partnered with community groups and hosted six input meetings to discuss how future federal investments will be spent. After submitting their spending plan to the Nevada Department of Education, the district will continue to report the progress on the federal funds to the community.

The Council has also offered guidance to its member districts, creating a toolkit, [Investing American Rescue Plan Funds Strategically and Effectively, Guidance for School Districts](#), to encourage districts to think more purposefully about how they can use their new ARP funds to not only safely reopen schools and address pre- and post-pandemic unfinished learning, but also build lasting, equitable systems of teaching and learning.

“On the anniversary of the ARP, the Council is grateful for this federal investment that enabled the nation's schools to maintain essential education operations and deliver critical resources to address the devastating impact of Covid-19,” said Council Executive Director Ray Hart. “ARP

funding has been a life saver for so many urban schools and children, allowing students to resume full-time in-person learning and enabling students in our highest poverty schools to receive a high-quality education. These federal funds are not only making a difference right now in the nation's urban schools but will also help jumpstart our efforts to meet the mental health, social emotional and academic needs of our students in the years to come.”

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