



EDUCATORS from across Kansas have answered the call this school year by educating students who attend our public schools in the middle of the COVID-19 pandemic. This pandemic has caused instructors, teachers, Education Support Professionals (ESPs), and other school staff to question if entering buildings to educate the future will jeopardize their health and their family members' health. Our public schools and post-secondary educational settings have faced years of underfunding while our educators continue to be underpaid. Our ESPs (paraeducators, bus drivers, administrative assistance, custodians, etc.) receive substantially lower wages, often below the poverty line. Our students and our hard working professionals in our public schools deserve better than this, especially during a global pandemic.

One economic safety net that educators and other employees have is the Families First Coronavirus Response Act (FFCRA) signed into law by President Trump on March 18, 2020. The FFCRA provides 80 hours of paid leave to employees who needed to quarantine, care for a family member quarantining, or provide care for a child whose school or child care is closed due to COVID-19 related reasons.

Just as the pandemic is intensifying, with Kansas setting record numbers of COVID-19 cases, the FFCRA will expire on December 31, 2020. Simultaneously, public school employees continue to risk infection of COVID-19 as a few school districts remain open against the guidance of public health department recommendations when there is a dangerously high level of community spread of COVID-19 due to the pandemic's instability.

Due to the pandemic, many educators have either had to quarantine or take leave to care for a loved one, leaving many without any additional sick days. Many educators will be penalized if required to quarantine again or care for a loved one needing to quarantine. This is an injustice that can be stopped.

The 10 local associations of the Baker's Dozen, representing educators and ESPs in Kansas City Metro are united in calling for the United States Congress and President Trump to put working families and children first by reauthorizing the Families First Coronavirus Response Act. Reauthorizing this critical legislation will ensure that all families can have economic security and slow the spread of COVID-19 in our communities and allow individuals to care for themselves and their families.

If the United States Government fails to respond to this impending crisis, we call on every local school board to honor the FFCRA provisions through the remainder 2020-2021 school year through memorandums of understanding with their educators. FFCRA leave is essential to providing economic stability for our educators and ESPs during the midst of high levels of community spread.

We invite all to urgently contact your U.S. Senators and House Representatives by [clicking here](#). We implore school boards to act in order to protect their employees and encourage the community to advocate for these protections with their local boards. We implore our communities to wear face coverings and social distance to slow the spread of COVID-19, allowing educators to return to in-person learning for our students.

Please contact Marcus Baltzell at marcus.baltzell@knea.org or 785-232-8271 ext 8134 for contact information for a specific local.



Eudora NEA Baldwin Education Association