Dear Chairman Frelinghuysen, Ranking Member Lowey, Chairman Cole, and Ranking Member DeLauro:

As Congress crafts a new supplemental appropriations act to assist U.S. states and territories affected by major disasters, we respectfully urge you to follow recent precedent and authorize supplemental federal funding to assist local educational agencies and institutions of higher education that enroll students displaced by Hurricanes Maria, Irma, and Harvey. Such funding will help elementary, secondary, and post-secondary schools shoulder the unexpected cost of enrolling and properly educating these new students, while continuing to provide a quality education to their existing students.

There is precedent for such emergency funding. In the wake of Hurricanes Katrina, Rita and Wilma, Congress utilized an authorized program to appropriate hundreds of millions of federal dollars to help school districts enrolling displaced students. Funding was distributed to 49 states and the District of Columbia, with Louisiana, Texas, and Mississippi receiving the most funds. We urge you to authorize a similar program to support local educational agencies receiving displaced students and to adequately fund it in the forthcoming supplemental.

In addition, Congress appropriated $10 million to assist institutions of higher education with unanticipated costs associated with the enrollment of college and university students displaced by the Gulf Coast hurricanes, and 99 institutions in 24 states and the District of Columbia received funds. This program should be reauthorized and adequately funded in the forthcoming supplemental.
We note that, in the wake of Hurricanes Maria and Irma, many families with school-age children are likely to relocate from the U.S. territories of Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands to the U.S. mainland. States with large Puerto Rican populations, such as Florida and New York, are likely to receive and enroll a relatively large number of such students in their public schools. Many students relocating from Puerto Rico to the U.S. mainland may lack English-language proficiency, since Spanish is the primary language of instruction in Puerto Rico's public school system. Therefore, these displaced students will require additional resources to enable their English-language acquisition and to facilitate their educational success. The level of federal funding appropriated, and the methodology by which such funding is distributed, should fully account for a displaced student’s status as an English learner.

Thank you for your attention to this matter.
Sincerely,

[Signatures and names of Members of Congress]

Stephanie Murphy  
Member of Congress

Carlos Curbelo  
Member of Congress

Ileana Ros-Lehtinen  
Member of Congress

Brian K. Fitzpatrick  
Member of Congress

Leonard Lance  
Member of Congress

Lloyd Smucker  
Member of Congress

Brian Higgins  
Member of Congress

Grace Meng  
Member of Congress
cc: The Honorable Mick Mulvaney, Director, Office of Management and Budget
    The Honorable Betsy DeVos, Secretary, U.S. Department of Education