

Congress should appropriate supplemental funding to support the emergency educational and support service needs of children and youth who are homeless as a result of Hurricanes Harvey, Irma, and Maria, as well as the California fires. This funding should be provided through the system of the McKinney-Vento Act's Education for Homeless Children and Youth (EHCY) program.

Hurricanes Harvey, Irma, and Maria, and the California fires, have caused significant increases in the number of children and youth who are experiencing homelessness.

- At least 46,000 children and youth are homeless as a result of the hurricanes alone, and have been enrolled in public schools across the country under the McKinney-Vento Act.
- It is essential that these children and youth can access school, where they can recover from the trauma of the disaster in safety, and access hot meals, health and mental health support, and educational and extra-curricular activities.

The EHCY program, recently reauthorized by the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), provides critical educational protections and services for homeless children and youth, including those who are displaced by disasters.

- The EHCY program ensures displaced children are enrolled in school immediately, and ensures that where possible, they can go back to the same school they attended before the storms, or in which they were enrolled after the storms. These twin protections reduce trauma and loss after disasters.
- The EHCY program requires that every local educational agency designate a liaison for homeless students. This provides an efficient, existing infrastructure to identify children and youth displaced by disasters, ensure their school access and stability, provide them direct support service, and coordinate with relief and recovery agencies for longer-term assistance.

School district EHCY programs face significant disaster response and recovery costs in meeting the needs of newly homeless children and youth. Those costs include:

- Transportation: Transportation is an important requirement of the McKinney-Vento Act that allows children and youth to maintain stability, regular school attendance, and normalcy in their education. However, transportation can be expensive. In light of the low appropriations for the regular McKinney-Vento Act EHCY program, school districts that are impacted by the hurricanes will need supplemental dollars to meet additional transportation costs.
- Staff time to coordinate emergency and recovery services. EHCY liaisons are adept at collaborating with community agencies, including relief and charitable agencies, to ensure quick and efficient use of donations and other resources to meet identified needs. However, the EHCY program is often understaffed, with many competing demands. Effective disaster response requires additional time and personnel.
- The demand for other educational and related services, such as school supplies, clothing, increased health and mental health needs, and emergency basic needs, is significant, costly, and cannot be met through charitable donations alone. In many rural areas schools are the hub for social service provision, with many schools housing food pantries, clothes closets and basic hygiene items.

The EHCY program has played an essential role after many major disasters. However, past federal supplemental appropriations were inadequate and poorly structured.

- EHCY liaisons have been at the front line of school districts' disaster response and recovery after major hurricanes and other disasters. They faced significant logistical challenges, including meeting students' physical needs and coordinating enrollment and transportation.
- Supplemental appropriations in 2005 and 2008 did not get out to school districts quickly, and did not allow EHCY programs to meet the needs identified by liaisons. Supplemental appropriations for the 2017 disasters should be structured to facilitate expedited funding through systems that are closest to the needs of children, families, and communities: the EHCY program.