Education Quarterly
Issue Area Review
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2021 Q1 review: education

**Administrative actions**

On his first weeks in office, President Biden:
- Extended the pause on student loans
- Signed an executive order upholding anti-discriminatory policies in all education institutions that specifically provides protections for students on the basis of sexual orientation and gender identity
- Signed other significant executive orders that promote racial equity and justice in school systems across the US, provide protections to safely reopen schools, and more

**Congressional actions**

The American Rescue Plan, a $1.9 trillion COVID-19 relief bill signed into law on March 11, includes:
- A provision to make student loan forgiveness tax-free, which will make it easier to pass legislation that cancels federal student loan debt
- $122.8 billion for K-12 emergency relief
- $395 billion for higher education emergency relief, with HBCUs, HIS, and other minority-serving institutions receiving 5% of these funds
- A provision to protect underfunded students

**Other news**

The CDC released recommendations for safely reopening schools. These guidelines include 3-6 feet of distance between students in classrooms, ventilation and HVAC regulations, avoiding clusters in schools, and monitoring new cases in local communities in the reopening decision-making process
- In response to the release of guidelines, the American Federation of Teachers released a statement expressing concerns that 3-6 feet of physical distance can be hazardous to teachers and students
Education look-ahead

Coronavirus
- **H.R.1319 – American Rescue Plan Act of 2021**
  - $165 billion for education-related provisions in the law
  - Includes $39.5 billion allocated for higher education emergency relief
  - Funding to promote equity for underfunded students

Outlook
- Was signed into law on March 11
- Will provide funds and resources to help schools safely reopen and promote equity in opportunity for the most underfunded schools and students across the US

School reopening
- **H.Res.241**
  - A resolution that urges Congress to prioritize funding and policy efforts to reopen K-12 schools through vaccine and other guidelines under the American Rescue Plan that would prioritize the return of students and teachers back to the classroom

Outlook
- Introduced on March 16 with 3 Democratic co-sponsors
- Similar resolutions were introduced earlier this year to Congress as well

China and postsecondary institutions
- **S.590 – CONFUCIUS Act**
  - Addresses China’s role in postsecondary educational institutions through Confucius Institutes
  - Establishes requirements for postsecondary institutions that have contracts with Confucius Institutes; an institution must prove academic freedom, prohibit the application of foreign law to its campus, and prove its managerial authority

Outlook
- Passed the Senate on March 4 and has a very high likelihood of being signed into law
- In a statement about the Senate bill, Senator John Kennedy (R-LA) said, “This bill would give colleges and universities full control over their resident Confucius Institutes and restore freedom of thought on their campuses… I hope the House joins us in sending the CONFUCIUS Act to the president’s desk.”