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ABOR Leadership Calls on AZ Congressional Delegation for Quick Engagement to Mitigate Damage of COVID-19 to Arizona's Public Universities

(Phoenix, Ariz.) - In letters to Arizona's congressional delegation, Arizona Board of Regents leadership urges the federal government for "quick engagement" to mitigate and remedy the impact and damage of COVID-19 to Arizona's public universities.

[Board Chair Larry E. Penley and Executive Director John Arnold issued the letters](#) that called on Arizona's congressional leaders to prioritize substantial financial support for public institutions of higher learning. The call to action includes requests for initiatives including:

- Emergency aid and relief for students;
- Emergency funding for institutions for health, safety, technological costs and lost revenues;
- Expansion of support for redirected COVID-19 testing and related, needed biomedical research;
- Refundable tax credits and incentives to assist families with college expenses; and more.

"This era in public higher education in Arizona is unprecedented as it is for colleges and universities across the nation facing severe challenges during the COVID-19 pandemic," said ABOR Chair Larry E. Penley. "Our universities are known for innovation and service and to that end are consistently stepping up to serve others as well as their campus communities during extremely trying times. We are here to serve, but are also facing considerable financial challenges as the institutions adapt and meet the needs of students during a pandemic."

Chair Penley also expressed his gratitude to Gov. Doug Ducey who [issued a letter to Arizona's congressional leaders](#) emphasizing the need for Arizona's public universities to be fully functioning and financially strong in the months ahead. In his letter, Gov. Ducey recognized the educational, scientific and economic contributions of the universities as key drivers of the state's recovery from the COVID-19 crisis. "I am tremendously appreciative that Gov. Ducey is urging the congressional delegation and our federal government to provide substantial support to our universities. I value his leadership to ensure any stimulus package includes the universities," said Chair Penley.

The universities are stepping up to support the many challenges brought about by COVID-10, such as redirecting cutting-edge research abilities to address COVID-19 vaccines and the delivery of quick, safe and accurate virus testing, and serving as a strong partner to K-12 in Arizona by sharing online resources and curriculum with their delivery platforms and expansion of K-12 digital instructional tools.

Financial impacts reverberate far beyond the universities campuses. Arizona's universities are the largest employers in many areas, the source of new research-driven solutions and prime drivers of Arizona's economy. Expenses incurred thus far are substantial. Moody's has downgraded the higher education sector from stable to negative, stating "universities face unprecedented enrollment uncertainty, risks to multiple revenue streams, and potential material erosion in their balance sheets."