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September 20, 2020

Hidalgo County Commissioners of Court
Honorable Richard F. Cortez
100 E. Cano St.
Edinburg, TX 78539
(956) 318-2600

Delivered via Email: Countyjudge@co.hidalgo.tx.us

Dear Judge Cortez,

IDEA Public Schools is honored to be a part of the Hildago County community. Over the last seven months we have been deeply moved by the hardships endured by our students, families, and community as they have struggled to deal with the impacts of COVID-19. At the same time, we have been inspired by the courage of teachers, the commitment of our elected officials, and the resilience of our kids and families.

IDEA is proud of the role we have played in responding to this crisis. When Governor Abbott order the closure of public school campuses across Texas, we immediately developed and implemented a robust distance learning program for our students. IDEA also understood that families had needs greater than education, and over the months of March through August, we provided over 4 million meals to families across the communities we serve.

Students and families across Texas are now making difficult decisions about when and how they will send their children to school. At IDEA, we are committed to ensuring our campuses and classrooms are safe for our families that want to send their children back to campus, while also offering a robust high-quality distance learning option.

Unfortunately, as you well know, not every family has the resources to take advantage of distance learning options. The Texas Education Agency (TEA) estimates that more than 1.8 million students lack the technology needed to learn from home.

IDEA Public Schools serves approximately 64,000 students across Texas, including 24,194 students in 35 schools in Hildago County. We conducted a comprehensive needs assessment of our families, with the goal of closing the connectivity gap across our district. We have already purchased and distributed over 6,600 MiFi devices to our students and families, and IDEA will pay the monthly connection charge for the entire year at a cost of approximately \$1.6 million. This includes 3,045 devices already distributed to students in Hildago County. We recently purchased an additional 2,855 devices, including 1,324 for students and families in Hildago County, at a total cost of \$317,760, of which 50% was paid for by the TEA.

The TEA is now offering an opportunity for school districts and municipalities to partner together through the [Local Covid Relief Fund \(CRF\) Matching Reimbursement program](#). If a local city or county provides a school district Covid Relief Funds for the purpose of purchasing connectivity technology, the TEA will match those funds dollar for dollar up to a maximum of 25% of the cost of the purchase.



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As such, IDEA Public Schools respectfully requests the support of the Hidalgo County Commissioners of Court. Specifically, we are asking the Hidalgo County Commissioners of Court to allocate \$79,440 from your Covid Relief Funds for your students and families in IDEA Public Schools in Hidalgo County¹. To take advantage of the CRF Matching Program, IDEA must submit an application by October 1st to the TEA. The application must include documentation of the local funding received by the Hidalgo County Commissioners of Court.

For your convenience, I have included with this communication a form letter that can be pasted onto Hidalgo County letterhead and returned to IDEA Public Schools to be included in our application to TEA for matching funds.

If you have any questions, please reach out directly to Rose Marques at Rose.Marques@ideapublicschools.org or 956-373-2102

Thank you in advance for your consideration of this important request.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Jill Dominguez". The signature is written in a cursive style and is placed over a light blue rectangular background.

Jill Dominguez
Regional Superintendent

¹ This represents 25% of the total cost, thus maximizing the TEA match. IDEA is requesting CRF funds from a variety of local municipal entities. Any funds received in excess of need will be returned.