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## **FEA: 'Relief payments' come with complications**

TALLAHASSEE — Florida's entire educational village pitched in over the past 15 months to keep students safe, supported and learning. All those people — teachers and support staff — deserve recognition for their hard work during an unprecedented and difficult time. Instead, state government has once again picked winners and losers in our public schools, awarding federal Covid "relief payments" to PreK-12 classroom teachers and principals while leaving out the support staff who are also essential to our students' success.

New details released by the Florida Department of Education make clear that the planned \$1,000 payments will come with state-supplied complications for those who receive them, and for their districts.

"This could have been a simple process with the money going straight to school districts," said Florida Education Association (FEA) President Andrew Spar. "Districts are the employers. They know how to pay their people and can do proper tax withholding. Instead, the state wants to issue the checks. That slows down the process and forces districts to scramble to send employee information to the Department of Education. It also means that educators who get the payments may be on the hook for taxes normally withheld by their employers. That's a lot of trouble just so the state can get credit."

Not all classroom teachers who worked throughout the pandemic will receive Covid checks. Teachers who retired or resigned before June 2 are ineligible, as of course are support staff. Included in that group are bus drivers, paraprofessionals, food service workers, custodians, office staff, and mental health experts such as school counselors, psychologists and social workers,

"If the governor wants to show that he values educators, these relief payments should have been handled differently," said President Spar. "What's happening appears to show how little regard he has for the work of our teachers and staff over the past year."

For a Q&A about the planned relief payments, go here: <https://feaweb.org/frontline/wheres-my-bonus/#faq>

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*The Florida Education Association is the state's largest association of professional employees, with 150,000 members. FEA represents PreK-12 teachers, educational staff professionals, higher education faculty and graduate assistants, students at our colleges and universities preparing to become teachers, and retired education employees. Connect with FEA on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#) and at <https://feaweb.org>.*