

May 27, 2020

Betsy DeVos
Secretary of Education
U.S. Department of Education
400 Maryland Ave SW
Washington, DC 20202

Dear Secretary DeVos:

The State of Wyoming sincerely appreciates the intent of Congress and the efforts of the U.S. Department of Education to provide financial support to states during these unprecedented times through the CARES Act.

Section 18008(a) of the CARES Act requires that a state's application for funding under Sections 18002 and 18003 include assurances that the state will maintain financial support for elementary and secondary education, and higher education, during fiscal years 2020 and 2021. The required level of support is the average of the state education funding provided during the three fiscal years preceding the CARES Act. Section 18008(b) provides that the Secretary of Education may waive the MOE requirement in subsection (a) for the purpose of "relieving fiscal burdens on states that have experienced a precipitous decline in financial resources." I hereby provide said assurance through our approved state biennial 2021-22 budget which funds at the required level or higher.

Similar to other states, Wyoming is experiencing declines in financial resources as a direct result of the COVID-19 pandemic. Unfortunately, though, Wyoming's financial outlook was grim prior to the pandemic. The significant and rapid decline in oil and other mineral prices has been deleterious and will render lasting damage to Wyoming's economy and state revenues. The pandemic has exacerbated an already precipitous decline. Financial decreases in sales and use tax revenue from depressed levels of business and consumer activity and spending will also be detrimental to Wyoming's operating budget. Lower returns on investments due to unfavorable market conditions will likewise contribute to budget shortfalls. Continued and precipitous declines are expected and have been exacerbated because of the pandemic. These financial challenges extend into the foreseeable future.

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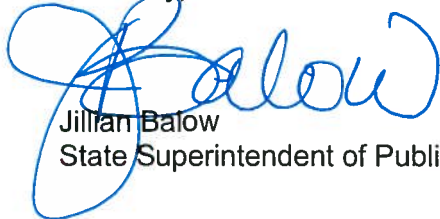
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The Wyoming state revenue estimating group anticipates a revenue shortfall over the next two years of approximately \$1.5B. To put this in perspective, this amount exceeds the biennial budget amount necessary to fund the entire state payroll. The full magnitude of financial impacts related to COVID-19 is not yet known, but it appears significant reductions in revenue are unavoidable. The current forecasts are deeply concerning and pose significant challenges to Wyoming in the months and years ahead.

These funds will provide essential resources to schools as they tackle recovery efforts and commence activities to move beyond the COVID-19 pandemic. The funding would also support efforts to bridge gaps in the education system that were identified as schools transitioned from a traditional brick and mortar setting to virtual instruction and other methods of delivering education. Adaptation is vital to the future of education in Wyoming. Schools must be well positioned to deal with similar outbreaks or other disruptions that require a completely new approach to providing education.

Thank you for your consideration of Wyoming's application for Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief funds.

Sincerely,



Jillian Balow
State Superintendent of Public Instruction