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TO: Christopher Fenton
U.S. Department of Education, Office of State and Grantee Relations

FROM: Jon Sheehan
Office of Governor John Carney

DATE: July 13, 2020

RE: Delaware's 45-Day GEER Report

Delaware received \$7,916,821 in GEER funding. Working closely with the Delaware Department of Education, our State Education Agency (SEA), we decided to invest essentially the totality of the GEER funds towards the K-12 system. The Governor's Office is partnering with the SEA to pool GEER funds and a part of the Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief (ESSER) funds to maximize impact. This report will focus on the GEER funds; however, references will be made to this joint GEER/ESSER pot. This combined funding is just over \$12.2 million.

1. Please describe the State's process for awarding GEER funds to LEAs, IHEs, and/or other education-related entities, including:

- a. Timeline(s) for awarding GEER funds to LEAs, IHEs, and/or other education-related entities;*
- b. The criteria, process and deliberations you use to determine which LEAs, IHEs, and/or other education-related agencies are:
 - i. "Most significantly impacted by coronavirus;" and/or*
 - ii. "Essential" for carrying out emergency educational service;**
- c. The funding mechanisms (e.g., grants, contracts) the State will use to provide GEER funds to LEAs, IHEs, and/or other education-related entities; and*
- d. Any specific funding conditions or requirements the State will place on awards to ensure the funds are spent for specific purposes or activities.*

Local education agencies (LEAs) will receive most of the GEER funds. The mechanism for allocating funding was discussed at length with the Governor's Office, SEA, LEA partners, and a number of stakeholders representing diverse interests. Delaware is a small state, and therefore it is difficult to single out specific LEAs and communities that were most impacted. Furthermore, Delaware is a choice state, so children from many communities attend schools in other communities, creating a challenge when allocating funding to address a public health threat affecting most communities. Given this, and the fact that Delaware has approximately 140,000 students only, it made sense to allocate funding to each LEA, since the impact of COVID-19 was felt in every community across our small state. Within each LEA, plans must show how the most vulnerable children (English learners, low-income students, students with special needs) will be supported through these funds.

For the GEER funding that is going to LEAs, we are allowing LEAs to apply for the funds through October 30, 2020. This allows those LEAs who are interested in setting up systems over the summer and before school starts to do so; those who would like to wait to see what the fall looks like may wait to apply. Each LEA knows what resources they have and need, so the timetable for applying for their piece of the funding will be from mid-July to October 30. For the funding that is going directly to specific LEAs or to state agencies, those funds will be allocated over the summer.

Roughly \$3 million of GEER funds will be available for LEAs to apply for. Applications must specify whether funding will be used to support learning and make up for lost learning time (which includes technology), deal with the behavioral health challenges students and staff face, or train and support educators, staff, and families (including technology).

Nearly \$3.5 million will be allocated to specific LEAs or schools for specific purposes. Funding was used to expand the Opportunity Funding program created by the Governor last year. Those funds will go to elementary schools with certain levels of students living in poverty or English learners, to strengthen supports. Additional targeted LEA funds will help grow career pathway programs that could have been discontinued and provide dual-generation family literacy programming in the City of Wilmington.

The remaining funds will go to state agencies. The SEA will receive funds for supporting families around remote learning, developing a new principal training program, and supporting prison education programs. The remaining funds will go to the Department of Technology and Information (DTI) for connectivity improvements and content filtering. Broadband deserts, particularly in rural parts of Kent and Sussex County, proved to be a large hindrance to remote learning. By pooling GEER and ESSER funds, the State will be able to accelerate the completion of towers, connect families to these towers, and assist with the cost of internet for low-income families.

The dual-generation family literacy program which resides in Christina School District's Stubbs Early Education Center will receive funding, as this is critical to multigenerational supports in our largest city. The goal is to support caregivers in their own education while simultaneously working with young students to build critical literacy skills.

Stubs is situated in one of the highest poverty parts of our state, so this investment will help Delawareans most impacted by this pandemic.

There are essentially three different types of uses of GEER funds:

- Grants that LEAs will submit spending plans for: Allocations to LEAs to focus on learning, training, and social-emotional supports.
- Grants that will be directed to specific LEAs: Directed funding for a specific purpose (dual generation family literacy program, advanced career pathway expansion, Opportunity Funding expansion).
- Funding to state agencies (SEA and DTI) to carry out statewide work: Some of this funding will go towards both grants and contracts with external entities.

For funds that LEAs apply for, the SEA will review applications and allocate the funds. We will list acceptable uses on the application, so we know how LEAs intend to use these funds and can ensure they are being used for appropriate purposes. The Secretary of Education has biannual check ins with each superintendent and charter lead, so the January and June/July meetings will include a review of this funding. LEA applications will be posted publicly.

Since teaching and learning happens in our schools within LEAs, we are directing most of the funding to our LEAs, which are essential for carrying out vital services, both educational and social-emotional. Additionally, our SEA and DTI are essential for their respective work, whether it is cross-district training, statewide programming, or regional connectivity work.

2. Describe the system of internal controls the State will use to ensure that GEER funds are expended for allowable purposes and in accordance with cash management principles and the Uniform Guidance. See 2 CFR §200.303.

Title 29 of the Delaware Code requires a system of accounting for and the recording and control of the fiscal practices and policies of the State (29 Del. C. §6303A(3)). All agencies of the State utilize a uniform statewide financial management and accounting system and adhere to accounting policies, rules, regulations, guidelines and procedures established for the State by the State's Department of Finance, Division of Accounting, and the Office of Management and Budget as set forth in the State's Budget and Accounting Policy Manual (<https://budget.delaware.gov/accounting-manual/index.shtml>). These policies and procedures ensure that funds are expended in compliance with their intended use and consistent with cash management principles, Uniform Guidance, and all other applicable rules, laws and regulations. The Manual provides for the establishment and regular review of internal controls, including standards for authorization, review and approval of payments, segregation of duties, and monthly reconciliations. The Manual further provides for adherence to all federal requirements associated with specific grant awards.

Additionally, for funds that are allocated to the SEA, their financial policies and procedures, which are no less restrictive than state policies, will be adhered to during the expenditure of these funds.

3. If GEER funds are being awarded or used for payments to SEA or IHE administrators, executives, and/or state or local teachers' unions or associations, please describe your process for reporting the amount of funds used for this purpose, and how the funds are consistent with allowable uses of funds under section 18002(c) of the CARES Act.

This is not an intended use of funds.

4. If you intend to provide GEER funds to LEAs, please describe the process you will use to ensure that LEAs receiving GEER funds provide equitable services to students and teachers in non-public schools located within the LEA in the same manner as provided under section 1117 of the ESEA.

Part of the application for funds will require LEAs to acknowledge that they are required to provide equitable services to students and teachers in non-public schools located within their LEA. For funding directed to each LEA outside of the application, this information will be communicated to the receiving LEA.