



THE SECRETARY OF EDUCATION
WASHINGTON, DC 20202

August 5, 2021

The Honorable Elsie Arntzen
Superintendent of Public Instruction
Montana Office of Public Instruction
P.O. Box 202501
Helena, MT 59620-2501

Dear Superintendent Arntzen:

I am pleased to approve Montana's American Rescue Plan Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief (ARP ESSER) State plan. This plan, together with the unprecedented funding available under ARP ESSER, will help ensure that districts and schools in your State can continue to reopen safely; support sustained access to in-person instruction throughout the summer and into next school year; and address the social, emotional, mental health, and academic needs of students due to the impact of the coronavirus pandemic (COVID-19), particularly those students most impacted by the pandemic.

Except as described below, Montana's plan is consistent with all ARP ESSER statutory and regulatory requirements and addresses all of the ARP ESSER State plan elements. This letter, along with Montana's approved ARP ESSER State plan, will be posted on the U.S. Department of Education's (Department's) website, and the Department will immediately release the remaining one-third of your State's ARP ESSER allocation for your use.

In its ARP ESSER State plan, a State educational agency (SEA) must describe how it will use the funds it reserves under sections 2001(f)(1)-(3) of the ARP Act on evidence-based interventions to address: (1) the academic impact of lost instructional time, (2) summer learning and enrichment programs, and (3) comprehensive afterschool programs; and must describe how the interventions it identifies will address the disproportionate impact of COVID-19 on certain groups of students. In its ARP ESSER State plan, Montana indicated that it has not yet identified its interventions. As a result, this approval is conditioned on Montana amending its ARP ESSER State plan to provide the requisite descriptions to meet the requirements in section D.1.i-iii, D.2.i-iii, and D.3.i-iii of the ARP ESSER State plan template. In addition, Montana must provide an update on its progress in selecting evidence-based interventions to meet these requirements within 30 days of receipt of this letter, and additional updates as required by the Department.

As part of the ARP ESSER State plan, each State assured that it would provide the Department the URLs for information related to ARP ESSER requirements. First, by June 21, 2021, each State was required to post publicly on its website, for the most recent time period available, data on mode of instruction and enrollment for all students, disaggregated by student subgroups. The State assured that it would provide to the Department the URL(s) where the public can readily find this data. The Department will follow up separately with you regarding this requirement, if necessary. Second, your State assured that it would provide to the

Department the URL(s) for the SEA and/or local educational agency (LEA) websites where the public can find the LEA plans for: (a) the safe return to in-person instruction and continuity of services; and (b) use of ARP ESSER funds. Please submit the URL or URLs to the Department via email to your State mailbox at Montana.OESE@ed.gov.

Please be aware that approval of Montana’s ARP ESSER State plan is not a determination that all the information included in the State plan complies with Federal civil rights requirements, including Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972, Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act, and requirements under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act. It is Montana’s responsibility to comply with these civil rights requirements.

The Department is committed to working in partnership with your State so that your ARP ESSER funds are quickly put to work to ensure students have sustained access to in-person instruction as well as the comprehensive supports they need to recover fully from the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic. As you implement this plan, we expect you to continue meaningfully engaging with stakeholders and the public and revising your plan, as necessary, to best meet the needs of students, parents, and educators. Ongoing engagement with all stakeholders is vital to ensuring that implementation of your plan is transparent, effective, equitable, inclusive, and best meets the needs of your State. The thoughtful, evidence-based, and timely use of ARP ESSER funds will have a lasting impact on our Nation’s schools and help to address the inequities in resources, services, and opportunities available to our students.

Sincerely,

/s/

Miguel A. Cardona, Ed.D.