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Massachusetts State Plan for American Rescue Plan – Homeless Children and Youth

For ARP Homeless I:

- 1. How the SEA has used or will use up to 25 percent of funds awarded under ARP Homeless I for State-level activities to provide training, technical assistance, capacity-building, and engagement at the State and LEA levels, including support to LEAs to increase access to summer programming in 2021. This must include how the SEA has supported LEAs to plan for and provide wrap-around services, in collaboration with State and local agencies for immediate needs this spring 2021, and how it will support LEAs for school year 2021-2022. This should include the extent to which the SEA has or plans to build capacity in LEAs that have not received an EHCY subgrant in the past in order to ensure that these LEAs are well-prepared to utilize the funds provided in ARP Homeless II;**

The Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) determined that ARP-Homeless I funding would be offered as a supplement to current EHCY subgrantees to expedite its distribution. Subgrantees were notified of potential funding during the spring grantee meeting on April 28, 2021. Reminders and technical assistance continued to be provided on the broad allowable use of funds, the importance of addressing immediate needs including summer and credit recovery programming, and local providers. As of August 1, 2021, 88% of the funds were awarded. Funds that have not been awarded by September 30, 2021 will be reallocated.

DESE is planning to build its own capacity for providing training and technical assistance to prepare LEAs that have not received funding in the past to use utilize ARP-Homeless II funds. This increased capacity will be funded through the portion of ARP Homeless I funding allowed for SEA activities. Training will focus on identification of students who are homeless, enrollment, providing wrap-around services, and collaboration with state and community providers and local resources during the 2021-2022 school year and beyond. Our regional liaisons will be brought up to speed on the details of the funding at a September 9, 2021 meeting and will be available to assist LEAs peer-to-peer. Training in the form of a webinar, Educational

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Stability office hours, and technical assistance will be offered in mid-September prior to the ARP Homeless II Request for Proposals being posted. The increased capacity at DESE and our network of regional liaisons will extend technical assistance to all LEAs regardless of their funding.

While ARP Homeless I and II planning and implementation activities have and continue to consume extensive SEA resources, DESE has not and will not be using any ARP Homeless I or II SEA level funds for any activities during the 2021 calendar year. Current activities for ARP Homeless I and II have been covered entirely with McKinney-Vento EHCY funding.

Beginning in Calendar year 2022, DESE intends to build capacity both through hiring additional staff and by contracting with organizations that target the needs of Massachusetts students who are homeless including from birth through college.

2. How the SEA has used or will use their funds for State-level activities to provide support to LEAs to increase access to summer programming and plan for and provide wraparound services for summer 2021, in collaboration with State and local agencies and other community-based organizations; and

Massachusetts EHCY subgrantees are required to maintain homeless education service coordination committees as a condition of their grant. These committees included an array of community-based providers, district staff and in many cases surrounding liaisons. Committees provide input to the annual needs assessment, assist with identification, accept referrals, collaborate on an individual case basis, and, in some districts, provide contracted services. The service coordination committees positioned subgrantees to move quickly in accessing wrap-around services, school- and community-based summer programming, and other local support services as ARP-Homeless I funds were awarded beginning mid-July 2021.

As mentioned above ARP Homeless I and II planning and implementation activities have and continue to consume extensive SEA resources, DESE has not and will not be using any ARP Homeless I or II SEA level funds for any activities during the 2021 calendar year. Current activities for ARP Homeless I and II have been covered entirely with McKinney-Vento EHCY funding.

Beginning in Calendar year 2022, DESE intends to build capacity both through hiring additional staff and by contracting with organizations that target the needs of Massachusetts students who are homeless including from birth through college.

3. How the SEA has used or will use at least 75 percent of funds awarded under ARP Homeless I for distribution to LEAs in accordance with all requirements of

EHCY. This must include the extent to which the SEA has or will use funds to supplement existing EHCY subgrants to allow for more rapid fund distribution to address the needs of students experiencing homelessness, and the extent to which the SEA analyzed and reviewed where there are significant concentrations of students and families experiencing homelessness across the State (including in LEAs that are not existing EHCY subgrantees), and how it has or will ensure that supports from ARP Homeless I can urgently reach them.

DESE worked diligently to post and award ARP-Homeless I funding opportunity quickly as a supplement to current EHCY subgrantees. Awards were made at the beginning of July 2021 to ensure students who are homeless were able to participate more fully in summer programming and access support services. As mentioned above subgrantees consulted their homeless education service coordination committees to determine needs and access community-based services and summer programming.

As a result of regular data review and encouragement to apply for EHCY funds, current subgrantees serve 75-80% of all homeless students in MA and cover many of the Commonwealth's gateway communities where incomes are low and affordable housing is limited and/or inadequate.

DESE continues to support EHCY subgrantees to collaborate with state and local community-based agencies through referrals, technical assistance, and trainings. Several grantees contract these services from local organizations like School on Wheels for tutoring and academic support; Youth Harbors to provide case management for unaccompanied homeless youth; Catie's Closet to establish clothing banks in schools; and Behavioral Health Network for mental health services among others.

For **ARP Homeless II**:

- 4. How the SEA will use up to 25 percent of funds awarded under ARP Homeless II for State-level activities to provide training, technical assistance, capacity-building, and engagement at the State and LEA levels, including support to LEAs to plan for and provide wrap-around services, in collaboration with State and local agencies, for school year 2021-2022.**

As mentioned above, DESE is planning to build its capacity to provide training and technical assistance that supports LEAs in identification, implementing best practices, and collaborating with local service providers into the 2021-2022 school year and beyond. Our goals include 1) hiring an additional full time staff member to support training; and 2) contracting for training, technical assistance, and resource development including for data analysis that informs LEA training and guidance. Increased capacity at DESE along with our network of regional liaisons will extend support to all LEAs, not just those currently receiving EHCY grants, ARP funds, or other funding.

- 5. How the SEA will use at least 75 percent of funds awarded under ARP Homeless II for distribution to LEAs in accordance with the final requirements. This must include a description of how the SEA will distribute funds in accordance with the required formula to address the needs of students experiencing homelessness and the extent to which the SEA has encouraged or will encourage the creation of consortia for those LEAs that may not meet the required minimum formula amount.**

DESE is implementing the US ED required formula to determine allocations and is offering at least 75% of ARP-Homeless II funding as an allocation grant. Our Federal Programs Office has provided current Title 1 allocations. Homeless education data for 2018/19 and 2019/20 have been downloaded to ensure the greater number of homeless students in each LEA is used in the formula. This has expanded the number of LEAs eligible for funding from approximately thirty EHCY grantees to over two hundred out of our four hundred LEAs.

LEAs are always offered the opportunity to form consortia for EHCY subgrants and will be offered this option for ARP-Homeless II funds as well. DESE is also looking at the possibility of encouraging the use of educational collaboratives (local consortia that provide direct educational services and professional development) to facilitate contracting among LEAs with small allocations or LEAs that wish to expand the scale of their implementation of services. By using educational collaboratives that already have existing fiscal agreements with LEAs, appropriate support services that are racially and culturally responsive to the needs of students who are homeless can be developed or contracted for more quickly.

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Applications will be streamlined to ensure accessibility and appropriate distribution of funds early in the 2021/2022 school year. Webinars and written guidance will provide technical assistance on support services to consider for contracting or sub-granting at the LEA level. Office hours and our regional liaisons will be available to provide assistance to LEAs not familiar with EHCY funding.

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For both ARP Homeless I and ARP Homeless II:

6. How the SEA will ensure that ARP-HCY supplements the support and services provided with ARP ESSER funds and does not replace the use of ARP ESSER funds to support the needs of students experiencing homelessness;

The needs of students who are homeless include educational services and programming. They also include needs such as clothing, food, mental and medical health services, and housing that go beyond the classroom and even the school community. Without those needs being addressed it is hard for students to focus and absorb their classroom lessons. But these are often beyond the scope of schools and it becomes imperative that schools collaborate with local resources and coordinate with other funding streams. DESE's EHCY grant applications always include a question on coordination with Title 1 and leveraging other funding streams to address the needs of students who are homeless. The ARP-Homeless I application explicitly asked about coordination with ESSER funding as well. While ARP-Homeless funding is extraordinary, it remains important that LEAs thoughtfully continue to coordinate and leverage other funding, resources, and services in order to efficiently and effectively provide the best support to their students who are homeless. DESE will continue to include an application question and space on the Budget Narrative that addresses this coordination. Supplementing rather than replacing will be included in training along with appropriate technical assistance.

7. The extent to which the SEA will use its State-level activities funds to award subgrants or contracts to community-based organizations that are well-positioned to identify children and youth experiencing homelessness in historically underserved populations such as rural children and youth, Tribal children and youth, students of color, children and youth with disabilities, English learners, LGBTQ+ youth, and pregnant, parenting, or caregiving students experiencing homelessness, and connect them to educationally-related support and wraparound services; and

DESE's own Racial Equity agenda requires outreach, collaboration, and contracting with organizations that are racially and culturally responsive to underserved communities. The ARP Homeless state-level funds will be used to support, collaborate, and contract with state and community organizations to identify students experiencing homelessness in underserved populations and connect those students to educational support and wraparound services.

DESE's Educational Stability Team works to ensure that students who are homeless, in foster care, or in migratory or military families have full access to a consistent education and support services. In doing so, the Team currently has extensive partnerships with state and community organizations that work to meet the needs of racially and culturally

diverse students experiencing homelessness. Included among those partnerships are the following:

- a. The Massachusetts Migrant Education Program is building connections with LEAs given the significant overlap with migratory students who are homeless;
- b. A regional liaison that lives in Berkshire County supports collaboration between LEAs and local community organizations in the rural communities of Western Massachusetts;
- c. MA Unaccompanied Homeless Youth and Young Adult Commission includes a targeted focus on pregnant and parenting unaccompanied homeless youth;
- d. MA Department of Higher Education in collaboration with EHCY designed, developed, and implemented the Moving to College Housing Scholarship that supports homeless high school students transitioning to college.
- e. Three Youth Housing Demonstration Projects (YHDP) serve unaccompanied homeless youth;
- f. Safe Schools Program for LGBTQ+ Students (formerly the Safe Schools Program for Gay and Lesbian Students) continues to be at the forefront of anti-bullying, suicide-prevention, and creating welcome school climates since 1993;
- g. The Mashpee-Wampanoag Tribal Education Agency is a formal partner in the federal State Tribal Education Partnership grant from the Office of Indian Education;
- h. MA Military Interstate Children's Compact Commission (MIC³) and the military's education liaison at Hanscom Air force Base; and
- i. The Massachusetts State Educational Stability Steering Committee members includes advocates for children with special needs, family shelters, the state shelter system, the child welfare agency, and the state's public assistance agency among others.

8. How the SEA will encourage LEAs to award contracts to community-based organizations to help identify and support historically underserved populations experiencing homelessness.

DESE is committed to improving its own resources and working with districts to strengthen and provide supports to students and families experiencing homelessness particularly among underserved communities. Homeless enrollment data shows that 80% of students who are homeless in Massachusetts are Black or LatinX, making it an imperative that LEAs are collaborating and contracting with local community-based organizations that are culturally and racially responsive to inequities experienced by their students. DESE has been engaging LEAs and the state Educational Stability Steering Committee on these concerns and will continue to draw on members' work and experience in their communities and with the populations they serve.