

February 10, 2017

Dear Chief State School Officer:

Thank you for the important work you and stakeholders in your State are engaged in to develop new State plans and transition to the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), which reauthorized the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 (ESEA). I am writing today to assure you that I fully intend to implement and enforce the statutory requirements of the ESSA.

Additionally, I want to provide you with an update on the timeline, procedures, and criteria under which a State Educational Agency (SEA) may submit a State plan, including a consolidated State plan, to the Department. States should continue to follow the timeline for developing and submitting their State plans to the Department for review and approval.

On November 29, 2016, the Department issued final regulations regarding statewide accountability systems and data reporting under Title I of the ESEA, as amended by the ESSA, and the preparation of State plans, including consolidated State plans. However, in accordance with the memorandum of January 20, 2017, from the Assistant to the President and Chief of Staff, titled “Regulatory Freeze Pending Review,” published in the Federal Register on January 24, 2017, the Department has delayed the effective date of regulations concerning accountability and State plans under the ESSA until March 21, 2017, to permit further review for questions of law and policy that the regulations might raise. Additionally, Congress is currently considering a joint resolution of disapproval under the Congressional Review Act (CRA) (5 U.S.C. §§ 801-808) to overturn these regulations. If a resolution of disapproval is enacted, these regulations “shall have no force or effect.”

In a Dear Colleague Letter dated November 29, 2016, the Department notified SEAs that it would accept consolidated State plans on two dates: April 3 or September 18, 2017. The Department also released a Consolidated State Plan Template that States were required to use if they submit a consolidated State plan. Due to the regulatory delay and review, and the potential repeal of recent regulations by Congress, the Department is currently reviewing the regulatory requirements of consolidated State plans, as reflected in the current template, to ensure that they require only descriptions, information, assurances, and other materials that are “absolutely necessary” for consideration of a consolidated State plan, consistent with section 8302(b)(3) of the ESEA. In doing so, the Department, in consultation with SEAs as well as other State and local stakeholders, will develop a revised template for consolidated State plans that meets the “absolutely necessary” requirement by March 13, 2017. The Department may also consider allowing a State or group of States to work together to develop a consolidated State plan template that meets the Department’s identified requirements through the Council of Chief State School Officers.

The regulatory delay and review, and the potential repeal of recent regulations by Congress, should not adversely affect or delay the progress that States have already made in developing their State plans and transitioning to the ESSA. The Department will be notifying States and the public of the revised template once it becomes available. In the meantime, States should continue their work in engaging with stakeholders and developing their plans based on the requirements

under section 8302(b)(3) of the ESEA. In doing so, States may consider using the existing template as a guide, as any revised template will not result in descriptions, information, assurances, or other materials that States will be required to provide other than those already required under the ESEA. **The Department will still accept consolidated State plans on April 3 or September 18, 2017.**

For your reference, the following programs may be included in a consolidated State plan:

- Title I, part A: Improving Basic Programs Operated by Local Educational Agencies;
- Title I, part C: Education of Migratory Children;
- Title I, part D: Prevention and Intervention Programs for Children and Youth Who Are Neglected, Delinquent, or At-Risk;
- Title II, part A: Supporting Effective Instruction;
- Title III, part A: English Language Acquisition, Language Enhancement, and Academic Achievement Act;
- Title IV, part A: Student Support and Academic Enrichment Grants;
- Title IV, part B: 21st Century Community Learning Centers; and
- Title V, part B, subpart 2: Rural and Low-Income School Program.

In addition, pursuant to ESEA section 8302(a)(1)(B), I am designating the Education for Homeless Children and Youths program under subtitle B of title VII of the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act as a program that may be included in an SEA's consolidated State plan.

I appreciate the hard work and thoughtful attention you are giving to implementing the ESEA, as amended by the ESSA. I understand that a great deal of work has already gone into the planning and preparation of your State plans, whether that is a consolidated State plan or individual program plans. One of my main priorities as Secretary is to ensure that States and local school districts have clarity during the early implementation of the law. Additionally, I want to ensure that regulations comply with the requirements of the law, provide the State and local flexibility that Congress intended, and do not impose unnecessary burdens. In the near future, the Department will provide more information on its review of existing regulations, as well as additional guidance and technical assistance.

We have a unique opportunity as we implement the ESSA. I look forward to working with you, districts, and parents to ensure every child has the opportunity to pursue excellence and achieve their hopes and dreams.

Sincerely,

Betsy DeVos