

## MEMORANDUM

March 24, 2020

**TO:** The Honorable Chair and Members of The School Board of Miami-Dade County, Florida

**FROM:** Alberto M. Carvalho, Superintendent of Schools 

**SUBJECT: U.S. EDUCATION DEPARTMENT BEGINS LOAN AND TESTING RELIEF**

President Trump announced two U.S. Education Department (ED) actions on March 20, 2020 that provide relief from standardized testing requirements for districts and students, and interim relief for workers with student loan payments. ED notes that it continues to work with Congress to obtain further waiver authority by statute as Congress negotiates a phase-three emergency bill in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. The Administration's measures described below are likely to be codified, and may be further extended, according to initial drafts of the phase-three stimulus bill.

The first ED action announces that testing waivers for 2019-2020 will be provided to states upon request based on "extensive school closures" in the state. A simplified template enables the chief state school officer to elect waiver of any of the following requirements under Section 8401(b) of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act:

- Assessment, waiving the requirements to administer all required assessments in school year 2019-2020 (Sec. 1111(b)(2));
- Accountability and school identification, waiving the requirements that a State annually meaningfully differentiate all public schools and identify schools for comprehensive and targeted support based on 2019-2020 data (Secs. 1111(c)(4) and 1111(d)(2)(C)-(D)); and
- Report card, waiving provisions related to assessments and accountability in section 1111(h) based on 2019-2020 data.

Schools that were identified for targeted support and improvement in the current year will maintain that identification status in 2020-2021 and continue to receive supports and interventions. Each state seeking waivers is required to provide the public and districts notice and opportunity to comment on this request, and ED will continue to speak to state and local leaders to identify any additional needed flexibilities. Based on last week's announcements made by Commissioner Richard Corcoran, it appears the Florida Department of Education will be pursuing waivers for assessment and accountability in light of the impact COVID-19 has had on school systems across the state.

The second action announces a two-month suspension of student loan payments, which may later be further extended. Below is a summary of the impact to borrowers.

- All borrowers with federally held student loans will automatically have their interest rates set to 0% for at least 60 days.
- Borrowers have the option to suspend payments as well during this time and may request the forbearance by contacting their loan servicer online or by phone. Suspension of payments may be automatically triggered if a borrower is or becomes delinquent by over 31 days after March 13, 2020.
- Borrowers who experience a change in income can also contact their loan servicer to discuss lowering the monthly payment.

Further information will be posted on the ED website <https://studentaid.gov/coronavirus>. For teachers who are making qualifying payments under Public Service Loan Forgiveness (PSLF), or for other workers with manageable monthly plans, ED notes that borrowers “may want to continue making payments” with all amounts applied to principal. However, if borrowers choose to enter forbearance, previous guidance makes clear that the 120 qualifying monthly payments do not need to be consecutive.

If you have any questions or need additional information, please contact Ms. Iraida R. Mendez-Cartaya, Associate Superintendent, Office of Intergovernmental Affairs, Grants Administration, and Community Engagement, at 305 995-1497.

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cc: School Board Attorney  
Superintendent’s Cabinet