



Illinois State Board of Education

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James T. Meeks
Chairman

Tony Smith, Ph.D.
State Superintendent of Education

June 8, 2017

Jason Botel
Acting Assistant Secretary
Office of Elementary and Secondary Education
U.S. Department of Education
400 Maryland Avenue, SW
Washington, DC 20202

Dear Acting Assistant Secretary Botel:

On behalf of Illinois, I am writing to request a waiver under Section 8401 of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act as amended by the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) of 2015. The waiver request specifically relates to reporting the annually required per-pupil school site expenditures of federal, state, and local funds consistent with Section 1111(h)(1)(C)(x) of the Act.

The reporting of financial data is a critical component of the overall accountability system in Illinois. We also believe this provision in the ESSA is an important tool for advancing civil rights assurances in every school in the United States. Sharing this information with community members is critical for districts to make transparent and informed decisions to improve student experiences and academic achievement. It is imperative that the data is correct and that districts have the infrastructure to report this data before this measure is put into place.

ISBE will be unable to fully and with fidelity collect and disseminate school based funding data from the 2017-18 school year by December 31, 2018 as required by 1111(h)(1)(C). Therefore, ISBE requests a waiver to meet this requirement no later than December 31, 2019.

To report by December 2018 timeline as indicated in ESSA statute would require ISBE to immediately revise the timeline of processing the data. Currently school districts (except Chicago) have until December to submit their financial data to ISBE. Chicago statutorily has until February to submit their financial data. Under this current structure, processing the data by December is not possible.


The waiver is necessary insofar as ISBE and its 855 districts require time to develop the necessary systems to collect and share this important data. The additional time will allow ISBE and its districts to:

- Finalize the collection tool for reporting local, state, and federal fiscal data;
- Amend the statutory rules governing data collection (a six-month process);
- Train district staff;
- Have districts create their accounts on a school-level basis;
- Collect the fiscal year 2018 financial data on a school-level basis by February 2019 (as per Illinois statute); and
- Report such by December 2019.

Per 8401(b)(3)(i) in preparation for this waiver request, Illinois will provide all Local Education Agencies (LEAs) in the state with notice and a reasonable opportunity to comment on its request. ISBE will publicize the waiver request in the Superintendent's Weekly Message for 30 days upon submission of this request. Any comments received will be considered and submitted for further consideration.

Please feel free to contact Melina Wright at (312) 814-1295 or via email at mewright@isbe.net if you have any questions regarding this request. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Tony Smith', written in a cursive style.

Tony Smith, Ph.D.
State Superintendent of Education