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MSDE Headquarters

Maryland State Department of Education

Response to the Analyst's Review and Recommendations

Senate Education, Business & Administration Subcommittee –
February 11, 2021

House Education & Economic Development Subcommittee –
February 11, 2021



Karen B. Salmon, Ph.D.
State Superintendent of Schools

The Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) welcomes this opportunity to share with the Committee some of its success stories and to address questions raised by the analyst.

Performance Analysis: Managing for Results

Fiscal 2020

The Department of Legislative Services (DLS) recommends to the budget committees that MSDE submit a similar closeout report for fiscal 2021 by October 1, 2021. This report should include an explanation for encumbrances and reversions for all general, special, federal, and reimbursable funds for any amount that did not equal zero.

MSDE Response:

MSDE Concurs.

MSDE Received Funds for MCAP

DLS recommends to the budget committees that MSDE report on (1) MCAP administration for the 2020-2021 school year; (2) anticipated additional costs or savings from fiscal 2021 through 2024; (3) an updated timetable for statewide test administration for all MCAP tests; and (4) plans, if any, to modify tests to accommodate student learning loss and missed test administration.

MSDE Response:

MSDE concurs.

Issues

MSDE Distributes coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security Act Funds

DLS recommends to the budget committees that MSDE report on the following CARES Fund distributions:

- \$10.8 in discretionary funds for MSDE administrative costs from the ESSER Fund;
- \$10.0 million distributed to LSS, the SEED School, MSD, and MSB, for costs related to school reopening from the ESSER Fund;
- \$10 million distributed by MSDE and DHCD to LSS for rural and urban broadband; and
- \$10.0 million in Competitive Innovative Grants for educational institutions with innovative approaches to addressing the COVID-19 pandemic from the GEER Fund.

MSDE Response:

MSDE partially concurs.

MSDE is prepared to provide the requested information on the ESSER Fund State set-aside, the ESSER Fund Reopening Schools Grants, and the Innovative Approaches to Connecting Students competitive grant program issued through the GEER Fund. MSDE is not prepared to provide the information on the Rural and Urban Broadband Grants as this program was handled completely through The Department of Housing and Community Development.

MSDE Digital Learning Stakeholder Committee Provides Remote Learning Guidance

Due to the importance of this topic, DLS recommends to the budget committees that the Digital Learning Stakeholders Committee submit a report on its work in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. The report should focus on remote learning challenges and remedies for teachers and students, including but not limited to (1) meeting schedule and updated list of committee members; (2) development and access to virtual professional development courses, particularly on remote learning, for teachers; (3) State learning management system budget, procurement, and deployment; (4) regional learning consortiums; (5) progress on virtual courses for career and technical education, juvenile services education, home and hospital and medically fragile, special education, ELL, and other vulnerable populations; and (6) future plans and budget, if any, for a State virtual school or other coordinated curriculum leading to a high school certificate or diploma.

MSDE Response:

MSDE partially concurs.

It should be noted that that Digital Learning Stakeholders Committee was dissolved many years ago, after completing its charge. The Digital Learning Advisory Committee (DLAC) is an outgrowth of a State Board of Education appointed- committee. These two committees have different charges. The DLAC is an active and engaged committee established to examine and expand online course opportunities across our state. Since the pandemic, their role was expanded to investigate and tackle topics such as identifying viable virtual learning delivery models to meet the current and future needs of Maryland’s students, developing common definitions related to virtual teaching and learning, determining device and access needs across the state, reviewing virtual program opportunities/availability, and establishing supports for all delivery models – blended, virtual, and hybrid. The group also contributed to the development of the Vision and Mission that will guide the *Maryland Digital Learning Strategic Framework: A Vision for the Future*.

The current committee is able to provide a report on items one, two and three. Additionally, information can be included concerning identified needs across the state, program recommendations, updates to the pilot Eastern Shore Virtual School, summary of the local school system digital survey, and the state strategic framework for digital learning.

Budget Reconciliation and Financing Act Recommended Actions

1. Add a provision to transfer \$235,000 in improperly encumbered general funds from the Maryland State Department of Education.

MSDE Response:

MSDE respectfully disagrees.

The Maryland State Library (MSL) was formerly the Division of Library Services and Development (DLSD) within MSDE. For FY 2018, MSDE served as the fiscal agent for the MSL as the MSL transitioned from DLSD within MSDE to its own State Agency. The DLSD issued a grant to a local government during this timeframe. MSDE sought information from the MSL regarding the open grant and received information in January 2021 that the grant should be closed. MSDE has closed the grant releasing the encumbrance and the funds will revert during the FY 2021 closing process.