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Gov. Wolf: $2.2 Billion in COVID-19 Funds Help K-12 Schools Improve Services to Students

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Education, Press Release

Governor Tom Wolf is dedicating $2.2 billion in federal stimulus funds to K-12 school districts and charter schools affected by the COVID-19 pandemic to support food programs, technological improvements and other education services.

“All schools have been affected by the COVID-19 pandemic, and I commend school communities for rising to the challenge to combat the toll it has taken,” said Gov. Wolf. “This extra funding is critical to help schools meet the unique needs of educating students at this time while keeping school buildings safe when students return to the classroom.”

The federal relief is provided by the bipartisan Coronavirus Response and Relief Supplemental Appropriations Act’s Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief (ESSER II) Fund passed by Congress in December.

“Additional, much needed support is on its way to Pennsylvania schools,” said Acting Secretary Noe Ortega. “These funds will provide critical assistance to school communities as they continue to navigate COVID-19.”

To promote equity, efficiency, transparency, and local flexibility, PDE will administer 100 percent of ESSER II funding through the Federal Title I, Part A formula which considers the number of low-income students served by school districts and charter schools. Each entity will receive an amount proportional to federal Title I, Part A funds received in the 2020 fiscal year under the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA).

PDE has urged school entities to continue to prioritize equity and consider how investments can accelerate opportunities for vulnerable students and families, including those living in deep poverty, students with disabilities, English learners, migrant students, students experiencing homelessness, and children in foster care.

School districts and charter schools may use ESSER funding for a wide range of activities, including food service; professional training; technology purchases; sanitization and cleaning supplies; summer and after-school programs; and mental health supports.

A list of ESSER II fund allocations is available on PDE’s website. Funds must be used by September 2023. School districts and charter schools must apply to PDE to obtain their allocated funds. The application process will be posted on the PDE website.

While ESSER II funding is beneficial for ongoing recovery and school reopening efforts, Acting Secretary Ortega noted that additional federal funding is needed to address the crises of the past year.

“We are thankful for the bipartisan effort to support school communities during this time, but PDE will be advocating for additional action from Congress in the days, weeks, and months ahead and I encourage educators to join us in raising their voices,” said Ortega.

For more information about Pennsylvania’s education policies and programs, please visit the Department of Education’s website at www.education.pa.gov or follow PDE on Facebook, Twitter, or Pinterest.