Governor Whitmer Announces $65 Million in CARES Act Funding for Michigan Schools

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Funding will target districts most significantly impacted by COVID-19

LANSING, Mich. -- Today, Governor Gretchen Whitmer announced that she will allocate nearly $65 million in federal Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act dollars to Michigan school districts, higher education institutions, and other education-related entities that have been most significantly impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic. This includes schools in Michigan's economically disadvantaged districts, and will help address the digital divide that has served as a barrier to remote learning for students and educators across the state. The funding comes from the Governor's Education Emergency Relief Fund.

"As we continue to navigate the COVID-19 pandemic and approach the start of the new school year, we must continue doing everything we can to protect our students, educators, and support staff. This funding will help us do just that, and ensure crucial support for our schools, whether it's helping schools access PPE and cleaning supplies or helping students mitigate the impacts of learning loss in districts that need it most," said **Governor Whitmer.** "This is a good start, but we still need the federal government to work together on a bipartisan recovery package to support all Michigan students and educators, as well as state governments, families, and small businesses."

The COVID-19 pandemic has had an unprecedented impact on Michigan's students, educators, and support staff, especially those in low-income communities. GEER funds are meant for districts that are determined to be most significantly impacted by COVID-19. To

ensure these districts are targeted, the framework distributes $60 million to school districts based on the number of students in high-need student groups. Districts will receive funding based on their numbers of economically disadvantaged students, special education students, and English language learners. To be eligible for funding, the school district's concentration of economically disadvantaged pupils, compared to total district enrollment, must exceed 50%.

"It's essential and appreciated that Gov. Whitmer is focusing these resources on districts with the highest need during this pandemic," said Michigan Education Association President **Paula Herbart**. "Both from a public health and from an educational standpoint, economically disadvantaged communities need these additional funds to keep students safe and academically engaged. Equity in education funding is a critical issue and it's encouraging to see Gov. Whitmer remain committed to addressing disparities so every student gets a great education no matter where they live."

"MASB appreciates any assistance the state can provide to districts in the time of heightened need," said **Don Wotruba**, Executive Director of Michigan Association of School Boards. "The earlier budget deal helped to prevent cuts for all school districts and provided them with needed funding for COVID safety costs. This new funding targets school districts that provide education services to children most at need."

"The GEER funds announced today are a significant step forward in equitably meeting the academic, social, and emotional needs of our most at-risk youth," said **Dr. Leadriane Roby**, Superintendent of Grand Rapids Public Schools.

Recipient districts will be required to use GEER funds for any of the following goals:

- **Connectivity**: Devices, internet access, access to remote services, or other similar purposes.
- **Student Mental Health**: Funding would enhance access to remote and in-person student mental health services.
- **Addressing Learning Loss:** Funding could be used by districts to offer supplementary content and intervention services to mitigate the impacts of learning loss.
- **Out-of-School-Time Learning:** Funds could be used to support out-of-school-time learning. These expenditures would ensure students have safe spaces to participate in remote education.
- **Remote Learning Materials and Training (digital and non-digital):** Funds could address both digital and non-digital content where remote learning continues as an instructional delivery model.

- **Teacher Training and Curriculum:** Funding could be used to provide additional professional development and curriculum modifications that allow districts to effectively facilitate distance learning while expanding their knowledge of the science of teaching.
- Other **health, safety, and wellness** needs identified, required, or recommended in the MI Return to School Roadmap.

$5.4 million will be distributed to other education related entities, and will be distributed for statewide mental health services, public television learning resources, implementation of teacher professional learning practices, and the Early On program to help reach more infants and toddlers through remote early intervention.

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