# Michigan Department of Education Receives Federal Waivers

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March 23, 2020

LANSING – The Michigan Department of Education (MDE) received preliminary approval over the weekend from the U.S. Department of Education to waive a number of federal requirements for statewide student testing and school accountability.

State Board of Education President Dr. Casandra Ulbrich and State Superintendent Dr. Michael Rice sent a letter to U.S. Secretary of Education Betsy DeVos on March 17, to urge the secretary to grant a nationwide waiver of statewide student assessments in favor of focusing on the more immediate needs of children.

The U.S. Department of Education responded last Friday by offering every state the opportunity to submit expedited waiver requests for a number of federal testing and accountability requirements. MDE submitted its request late Friday afternoon.

“We are pleased that the U.S. Department of Education heard our call to waive the federal requirement for statewide student testing,” Dr. Rice said. “We now need the Michigan legislature to amend state law that requires statewide testing and accountability.”

In the federal waiver request letter, Dr. Rice wrote that because of the extensive school closures resulting from the COVID-19 crisis, Michigan is requesting these waivers because it is not possible to administer assessments required under federal law or to comply with the accompanying school accountability requirements.

He also noted that the school closures are in response to extraordinary circumstances for which a national emergency has been declared and that the school closures “will protect the health and safety of students, staff, and our communities.”

If the public or local school districts would like to comment on this federal assessment and accountability waiver request, they can do so through the email address: mde-essa@michigan.gov.

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