



BILL LEE
GOVERNOR

STATE OF TENNESSEE
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
9th FLOOR, ANDREW JOHNSON TOWER
710 JAMES ROBERTSON PARKWAY
NASHVILLE, TN 37243-0375

PENNY SCHWINN
COMMISSIONER

August 5, 2019

Mr. Frank Brogan, Assistant Secretary
Office of Elementary and Secondary Education
Office of Academic Improvement
U. S. Department of Education
400 Maryland Way, SW
Washington, D.C. 20202

Assistant Secretary Brogan:

The Tennessee Department of Education (TDOE) is requesting a Tydings waiver from the United States Department of Education for the following grant:

- CDFA/Subprogram number 84.010A, PR/Award Number S010A170042, current balance of **\$11,450,278.73** with an award date of July 1, 2016 to September 30, 2018.

This request is made under the statutory authority for the period for obligating and expending carryover funds in the Tydings Amendment section 412(b) of the General Education Provisions Act (GEPA), 20 U.S.C. 1225(b) and in accordance with section 76.709 of the Education Department General Administrative Regulations (EDGAR), 34 C.F.R. § 76.709.

The Tennessee Department of Education (TDOE) does not expect to expend fully the Title I, A school improvement FY17 funding during the period of availability due to following factors:

- 1) *Significant transition of program leadership at the state level.* There have been frequent and significant changes of leadership in the Office of School Improvement (OSI) at the state level. This office has experienced three leaders in the past twelve months, the retirement of one of its experienced directors, and repeated onboarding of new staff. This level of turnover has created capacity issues challenging to manage the grant as effectively as needed to ensure timely draw downs and expenditures in line with approved school improvement grant applications.

- 2) *Delays in awarding funds.* With the staffing issues we have experienced, the awarding of grants was delayed. While TDOE is committed to ensuring that districts work with their priority schools to conduct comprehensive root cause analyses to inform the grant, this process and the subsequent review of the information was unfortunately lengthened by the staffing issues in the OSI.

The TDOE is requesting to extend the period of availability for the remaining \$11,450,278.73 from the S010A170001 award to September 30, 2020. TDOE proposes to utilize the additional time afforded in the waiver to provide additional support for the nine districts receiving these funds - building upon their successes and redirecting where appropriate. Further, this support from the OSI will ensure that districts are complying with program requirements while implementing programs with fidelity. As a result, students in Tennessee's priority schools will benefit from this extension.

If this waiver request is approved, the TDOE will provide stakeholders in the State with notice and a reasonable opportunity to comment on this request. The TDOE will provide notice and information regarding this waiver request to the public in the manner in which the SEA customarily provides such notice and information to the public. This opportunity for comment will be posted in the Public Notices section of the TDOE website. Impacted project directors will also be notified of the request via email.

Please feel free to contact Katie Poulos, by telephone at 615-917-0122 or at Katherine.Poulos@tn.gov if there are questions regarding this request or if additional information is needed.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Dr. Penny Schwinn, Ph.D.
Commissioner