



April 3, 2020

Governor Steve Bullock  
Office of the Governor  
P.O. Box 200801  
Helena, MT 59620-0801

Dear Governor Bullock:

The CARES Act provides for \$8.8M of federal funds flowing to Montana from the appropriation for the Governor's Emergency Education Relief Fund. These funds have the purpose of providing emergency support for the on-going functionality of school districts and institutions of higher education that have been most significantly impacted by COVID-19. Some decisions needed include how to divide the funds between K-12 education and higher education, how to allocate funds to institutions within these categories, and whether to include specifics on how the money is spent.

I would like to offer some thoughts for you to consider as you make these decisions. In addition to the \$8.8 million, the CARES Act made \$41.2 million available to Montana school districts through the Title I formula. The OPI has made the decision to use a portion of the state set aside from that funding to ensure that every K-8 and high school program in the state will receive at least \$10,000, which the OPI will disburse as soon as the federal government issues the funds.

For the Governor's Emergency Education Relief Fund, please consider the lawful intent of providing the funds to those institutions with the greatest need. For the stage Montana is at in the spread of COVID-19, it may not yet be apparent which areas will have the greatest need. Since all institutions will have other federal funds immediately available, it may be wise to consider reserving the \$8.8 million until our state can fully understand where it will be of the most benefit.

We are a local control state and as such I recommend not adding additional restrictions other than the general guidance of the CARES Act. The OPI award of the School Emergency Relief Fund allows the most flexibility for school districts to determine the best use of the funds and I recommend these additional funds follow the same flexible path.

The OPI, education associations, and local school leaders have robustly collaborated in a transparent fashion to create the best possible outcome for Montana students during this crisis. I recommend allowing the education community to express their ideas for the best use of these funds to ensure we are putting Montana's students first.

I am ready to discuss these topics and look forward to working with you to provide relief to Montana students, families, teachers, and school leaders.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Elsie Arntzen". The signature is written in a dark ink and is positioned below the word "Sincerely,".

Elsie Arntzen  
Superintendent of Public Instruction