

Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515-2600

February 26, 2021

The Honorable Phil Rosenfelt
Acting Secretary of Education
400 Maryland Ave, SW
Washington, DC 20202

Dear Acting Secretary Rosenfelt,

I write to request that in your role as Acting Secretary of Education, you immediately consider Montana's proposed strategic waiver to suspend testing and for the Department of Education (DOE) to give clear guidance to Montana. While DOE decided this week that states must administer federally mandated tests, Montana prepared and submitted its second strategic assessment waiver application through the DOE before this decision in order to ensure the necessary flexibility for schools in Montana. I strongly urge you to consider and grant this strategic waiver to suspend testing for Montana.

Since COVID-19 struck our nation nearly a year ago, schools have been forced to adapt to changing circumstances. In order to do this and best serve their students they need flexibility. The federally required annual statewide assessments in math, reading/language arts, and science require planning and preparation. At a time when schools are already experiencing and facing education disruptions because of COVID-19 it is unreasonable to force them to administer these tests.

On March 30, 2020, Montana's Superintendent of the Office of Public Instruction, Elsie Arntzen, applied to the DOE for a proposed strategic waiver to suspend testing which was quickly granted for the 2019-2020 school year. Montana's Office of Public Instruction submitted another strategic waiver on February 5, 2021 seeking a suspension of this testing requirement for the 2020-2021 school year as the impacts of COVID-19 continue. In this unique and uncertain time, standardized tests of achievement are not an appropriate measure of student learning.

DOE's decision that states must administer federally mandated statewide tests this spring disregards Montana's schools and students during this unprecedented time. I support the Montana Office of Public Instruction's consideration to place Montana students and their needs

first. This strategic waiver will give all schools and students in Montana the opportunity and flexibility needed to rebound from the COVID-19 pandemic.

I urge you to immediately review and grant Montana's strategic waiver to suspend testing. Thank you for considering this urgent request and I look forward to hearing from your office.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Matthew Rosendale, Sr." with a stylized flourish at the end.

Matthew Rosendale, Sr.
Member of Congress