

OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR
STATE OF MONTANA

GREG GIANFORTE
GOVERNOR



KRISTEN JURAS
LT. GOVERNOR

January 19, 2021

Superintendent Elsie Arntzen
Montana Office of Public Instruction
P.O. Box 202501
Helena, Montana 59620-2501

Dear Superintendent Arntzen:

Montana students must have fair, equal, and meaningful opportunity to obtain a high-quality education and reach, at a minimum, proficiency on challenging college and career readiness standards. With this vision, emphasis on educational services, assessment, and accountability have been heightened to serve all Montana students and to close opportunity gaps. However, COVID-19 has made it practically and logistically difficult to administer federal standardized testing for our students and we believe it is prudent to request a waiver of the federal testing, accountability, and reporting requirements.

After reviewing on January 18, 2021, Montana's proposed strategic waiver to suspend testing, accountability, and reporting for the 2020-2021 school year, I affirm and support the Montana Office of Public Instruction's careful consideration and thoughtfulness to place Montana students first and pursue the maximum flexibility under law. I also affirm and support the changes to the Montana ESSA Accountability System through the COVID-19 Addendum and limited Waiver for Targeted Support and Improvement (TSI).

Moreover, I concur that the strategic waiver, and addendum with the TSI waiver, to suspend and remove state testing, accountability, and reporting from this school year (2020-2021) set out in provisions under ESSA is critical. This waiver will give all Montana students, teachers, and schools an opportunity and flexibility to rebound from the pandemic and increase the quality of instruction for students by focusing on student learning. Furthermore, the COVID-19 Addendum with the TSI waiver is important as it seeks to provide school districts with an extension of the COVID-19 Accountability waivers and relief from the impact of COVID-19 on the accountability system for the 2020-2021 school year.

I appreciated the opportunity to work with OPI on the waivers and addendum and I applaud you and your staff for a thorough process.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Greg Gianforte".

Greg Gianforte
Governor of Montana