Good Afternoon. Please find this week's Federal Advocacy & Public Policy Update at the conclusion of this message.

Have a good week!

Best,

J.T.

Federal Advocacy & Public Policy Update

July 12, 2021

Congressional Update

Congress Returns Next Week to a Busy Schedule

Both the House and the Senate remained on a short July 4 recess this week, with both chambers scheduled to return to the Capitol over the next two weeks. When lawmakers return, they will have roughly 30 legislative days to determine how to pass legislation to fund the entire federal budget, including the U.S. Department of Education and the programs it administers, past September 30—when the next federal fiscal year (FY22) is set to begin and when current funding is set to expire. The House is scheduled to take the next step in this process next Monday, July 12, when the Appropriations Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human Services, and Education will hold its markup of a bill providing funding for the U.S. Department of Education (USED) and other related federal agencies and programs. Text of the bill, including detailed program funding levels, is expected to be released Sunday, July 11, and the markup can be livestreamed here.

Additionally, Congress and the Biden Administration have continued tenuous negotiations over a potential investment in the nation's aging infrastructure. These talks have yet to produce formal legislation and are expected to be a main priority for Congress as they return next week.

Aside from funding, lawmakers in the Senate will be considering a slate of several U.S. Department of Education nominees next week including Catherine Lhamon who, if confirmed, would serve as Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights, Roberto Rodriguez who would serve as Assistant Secretary for Planning, Evaluation, and Policy Development, and Elizabeth Brown to be General Counsel. This hearing will be livestreamed here and is set to take place July 13. USED has also recently announced several new appointments made at the agency, which can be found here.

Administration Update

USED Announces New Funding Opportunity for Homeless Students

The recently passed American Rescue Plan (ARP), Congressional Democrats' pandemic aid package which provided over $122 billion in additional funding for the K-12 education community, provides an additional $800 million for homeless students. Known as the Homeless Children and Youth Fund, USED distributed $200 million of this funding earlier this year to help states and local communities meet the unique and challenging needs of students experiencing homelessness. The remaining $600 million was made available on Tuesday, July 6, to states and local school districts in anticipation of the upcoming 2021-22 school year. More information on this announcement, including how to apply, can be found here.

USED Approves Several State ARP Plans

On Wednesday, July 7, USED announced that it had approved the first seven state plans to meet the requirements of the American Rescue Plan (ARP). Earlier this year, USED distributed two-thirds of the over $122 billion Congressional Democrats appropriated for the K-12 community, with the remainder of funds held back until states and territories submitted and received federal approval detailing how these funds would be spent to safely reopen for in-person instruction and meet the wider needs of students. USED has formally approved state plans for Arkansas, the District of Columbia, Massachusetts, Rhode Island, South Dakota, Texas, and Utah. Forty state plans remain for review and potential approval by USED to access the remainder of their individually allocated funding under the ARP. More information on this process can be found here.

CDC Releases Updated Guidance for K-12 Schools

Today the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention released updated Guidance for COVID-19 Prevention in Kindergarten (K)-12 Schools. The updated guidance focuses on helping administrators in K-12 schools, along with state and local health officials, safely support in-person learning as well as sports and other extracurricular activities. The updates are based on the latest science and emphasize the COVID-19 prevention strategies most important for K-12 schools to support in-person learning.