UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

OFFICE OF ELEMENTARY AND SECONDARY EDUCATION

JUL 31 2014

The Honorable Mick Zais
State Superintendent of Education
South Carolina Department of Education
1429 Senate Street
Columbia, SC 29201

Dear Superintendent Zais:

This letter is in response to South Carolina's March 4, 2014 request for a one-year extension of flexibility under the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965, as amended (ESEA flexibility), so that South Carolina may continue to implement ESEA flexibility through the end of the 2014–2015 school year.

Our team has reviewed South Carolina's request and, pursuant to section 9401(d)(2) of the ESEA, I am pleased to extend South Carolina's ESEA flexibility request for one year, through the end of the 2014–2015 school year. My decision to extend South Carolina's ESEA flexibility request is based on my determination that ESEA flexibility has been effective in enabling South Carolina to carry out important reforms to improve student achievement and that this extension is in the public interest. I have also determined that South Carolina's monitoring next steps have been adequately addressed. This letter also marks my approval of South Carolina's proposed amendments to Principle 1 of its ESEA flexibility request, which include high-quality plans to implement those amendments during the 2014–2015 school year. A summary of South Carolina's approved amendments is enclosed with this letter, and South Carolina's amended request will be posted on the U.S. Department of Education's (ED) website.

This extension is subject to South Carolina's commitment to continue working with ED on South Carolina's requested amendments to its teacher and principal evaluation and support systems, which may require additional flexibility. South Carolina's continued work with ED on its requested amendments to Principle 3, as well as South Carolina's progress in implementing its Principle 1 plans and high-quality plan to address one next step identified during Part B monitoring, during the 2014–2015 school year will inform ED's decision regarding renewal of South Carolina's ESEA flexibility after the 2014–2015 school year.

South Carolina continues to have an affirmative responsibility to ensure that it and its districts are in compliance with Federal civil rights laws that prohibit discrimination based on race, color, national origin, sex, disability, and age in their implementation of ESEA flexibility. These laws include Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972, Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act, the Age Discrimination Act of 1975, and requirements under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act.

I am confident that South Carolina will continue to implement the reforms described in its approved ESEA flexibility request and advance its efforts to hold schools and school districts accountable for the achievement of all students. If you need any additional assistance to implement your ESEA flexibility request, please do not hesitate to contact Elizabeth Witt at: elizabeth.witt@ed.gov or Amy Jenkins at: amy.jenkins@ed.gov.

Thank you for your commitment and continued focus on enhancing education for all of South Carolina's students.

Sincerely,

Deborah S. Delisle

Deborah S. Delisle
Assistant Secretary

Enclosure

cc: Karla Hawkins, Federal Liaison

**Approved Amendments to South Carolina's ESEA Flexibility Request**

The following is a summary of amendments to South Carolina's approved ESEA flexibility request. The U.S. Department of Education (ED) approves the following amendments because South Carolina's ESEA flexibility request, as amended, continues to be aligned with the principles of ESEA flexibility. Please refer to ED's flexibility website (http://www2.ed.gov/policy/elsec/guid/esea-flexibility/map/sc.html) for South Carolina's complete ESEA flexibility request.

**Transition to College- and Career-Ready Standards (1.B) and Develop and Administer Annual, Statewide, Aligned, High-Quality Assessments that Measure Student Growth (1.C)**

Revision: South Carolina has already implemented the Common Core State Standards and had planned to begin using the Smarter Balanced assessments in the 2014–2015 school year. However, due to changes in State law made in 2014, the State must procure different assessments for the 2014–2015 school year and must adopt new State standards prior to the 2015–2016 school year. Revisions to South Carolina's ESEA flexibility request include alterations to previously approved timelines and activities that are necessary to make the adjustments required by changes to State law. The revisions constitute a high-quality plan for how the State will, during the 2014–2015 school year, 1) procure and implement a new, high-quality assessment for use in 2014–2015 and 2) develop new college- and career-ready standards for use in the 2015–2016 school year.