



STATE OF SOUTH CAROLINA
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

MOLLY M. SPEARMAN
STATE SUPERINTENDENT OF EDUCATION

February 14, 2019

Dr. Debra W. Hamm, Superintendent
Rev. Ralph W. Canty, Sr., D.Min, Chairman of the Board
Ms. Jennifer Miller, Chief Finance Officer
Sumter School District
1345 Wilson Hall Road
Sumter, SC 29150-1890

Dear Dr. Hamm, Rev. Cantey, and Ms. Miller:

On March 19, 2018, the Department sent notice to the Sumter School District and to the Board regarding the declaration of fiscal caution under S.C. Code Ann. §59-20-90(D)(2)(d) (Supp. 2017) for failure to maintain the mandatory minimum of one month of general fund operating expenditures in its general fund. Prior to this most recent letter, the district received a similar letter in 2017 regarding an investigation by the State Law Enforcement Division (SLED) as well as auditing irregularities in the district's use of funds under the Child Early Reading Development and Education Program (CERDEP). Further, the district publically declared a deficit during the 2016–17 school year.

The Sumter Board of Education has recently taken action to schedule the reopening of Mayewood Middle for the 2019–20 school year. The district closed the school last year, consolidating it with R.E. Davis Elementary school and forming the new R.E. Davis College Preparatory Academy. The prior financial issues experienced by the district cause concern when consideration is given to the cost of reopening and maintaining two schools. These unexpected costs may lead to the district having to declare a second financial deficit, which could result in a state of emergency being declared.

The Sumter School District submitted a financial plan to the Department outlining a multi-year strategy to remedy the continued financial issues in the district and ensure the district meets the required general fund reserve. This plan distinctly contemplated the school continuing to remain closed and there will be a clear cost to the district to reopen the school. Additionally, the district has an outstanding Individuals with Disabilities Education Act maintenance of effort finding that must be addressed. The Department requests that the district submit a proposed financial plan

February 14, 2019

outlining the cost and impact of reopening the school and addressing the maintenance of effort issue by February 20, 2019.

Beyond the financial concerns, however, is the impact on student achievement and consideration of educational opportunities offered to students. Potentially diverting current dollars from the classroom to reopen two previously closed schools could not only have a detrimental fiscal impact on the district as a whole, but most certainly pose a risk for the opportunities currently offered students in other classrooms in the district.

Sincerely,



Molly M. Spearman
State Superintendent of Education

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