

**Congress of the United States**  
**Washington, DC 20515**

September 21, 2020

The Honorable Betsy DeVos  
Secretary of Education  
United States Department of Education  
400 Maryland Avenue, SW  
Washington, D.C. 20202

Dear Secretary DeVos,

As the United States works towards recovery from an unprecedented pandemic, our schools remain a top priority for our future. The Trump Administration charged states with creating safe environments for schools to reopen in the fall and South Carolina followed suit. South Carolina Superintendent of Education Molly Spearman took proactive leadership to call together a group of educational professionals for the AccelerateED task force. This task force was composed of parents, educators, and administrators representing all aspects of the K-12 public education system. The group was charged with studying the barriers to school operations and student learning during the COVID-19 pandemic and providing recommendations on how schools and districts can best meet the needs of students in the coming school year. After months of discussion and feedback from thousands of stakeholders across South Carolina, the task force released a 93-page document outlining recommendations and providing guidance for schools to re-open.

In this final set of recommendations, the task force included the need for a waiver from federal testing requirements in the 2020-2021 school year. Superintendent Spearman acted on this recommendation by sending you a letter on July 14, 2020 outlining the specifics of the waiver request with support from the South Carolina General Assembly and Governor. Based on the recommendations of the task force and the actions taken by the State's leadership, we ask that you strongly consider this request for a one-year federal testing waiver.

As required with all waiver requests, the South Carolina Department of Education (SCDE) solicited public input on the assessment waiver. To date, SCDE has received almost 36,000 submissions from parents, teachers, administrators, students, and taxpayers. Of these submissions, 93% of respondents support South Carolina seeking a one- year exemption of student assessments as required under the Every Student Succeeds Act. These results are consistent with the desire of South Carolina's educators and families to maximize instructional time during the current school year. We already know that COVID-19 has caused a disruption in student learning, and instead of using valuable time to reaffirm that fact with a test, we should be using that time to address student needs through instruction.

Students, teachers, and families across South Carolina had a tremendous burden lifted off their shoulders when you took action to grant a testing waiver for Spring 2020. As we enter a new era of in-person, virtual, and hybrid learning, students, teachers, and families continue to be under immense

stress as they navigate uncharted ways of learning during the pandemic. Our hope is that by honoring this waiver request, some of this pressure will be alleviated and our students will have more time to focus on learning.

We appreciate your time and consideration of this request.


Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Joe Wilson". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, stylized "J" and "W".

Joe Wilson  
Member of Congress

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Lindsey O. Graham". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, stylized "L" and "G".

Lindsey O. Graham  
United States Senator

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Jeff Duncan". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, stylized "J" and "D".

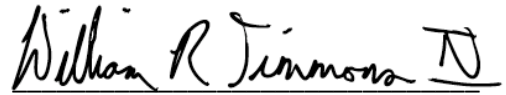
Jeff Duncan  
Member of Congress

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Tom Rice". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, stylized "T" and "R".

Tom Rice  
Member of Congress

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Ralph Norman". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, stylized "R" and "N".

Ralph Norman  
Member of Congress

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "William R. Timmons, IV". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, stylized "W" and "T".

William R. Timmons, IV  
Member of Congress