



GOVERNMENT OF PUERTO RICO

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of the Secretary

February 16, 2021

Ruth Ryder
Deputy Assistant Secretary
Office of Elementary and Secondary Education
U.S. Department of Education
400 Maryland Avenue, SW
Washington, DC 20202

VIA Email: OSS.PuertoRico@ed.gov

Dear Ms. Ryder:

The Puerto Rico Department of Education (PRDE) in accordance with section 8401 of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA), as amended by Every Student Succeeds Act of 2015 (ESSA) is requesting a one-year waiver from the statutory requirements in section 1111(b)(2), related to the administration of its state assessment and its alternate version (META-PR and META-PR Alterna), as required under Title I, Part A of the ESEA.

Puerto Rico has suffered the impact of two major events during the past year, seismic events, and pandemic Coronavirus (COVID-19). Beginning on December 28th, 2019 Puerto Rico suffered from a continuous seismic activity episode that affected the southwestern portion of the Island. Municipalities of Ponce, Peñuelas, Guayanilla, Guanica, Yauco, and San German, have seen most of their schools' facilities suffer serious damages to their infrastructure. On January 7th, 2020, after the Island suffered from a 6.4 magnitude earthquake, the Hon. Wanda Vázquez Garced, past Governor of Puerto Rico, issued the Executive Order 2020-01 on which an emergency was declared, and on January 16th, 2020 a Major Disaster Declaration was issued by the President of the United States.

During the month of March to further exasperate the emergency, the Governor of Puerto Rico ("Governor") issued Executive Order No. OE-2020-020 ("Executive Order"), in which she declared Puerto Rico in a state of emergency due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Several executive orders have followed ever since, and students have kept receiving at distance education. Under the actual conditions PRDE is conscious that reaching a 95 percent of participation as requested by ESSA, will not be possible, an analysis was conducted and is available for evaluation.

PRDE is conscious of the importance of data to improve student's academic achievement. Aware of the significance of obtaining data that identifies the areas to be strengthened in each student,

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PRDE created a Student Assessment Profile and will administer a diagnostic baseline assessment, educators will be able to identify areas to be reinforced individually, as they complete an individualized analysis per student.

As such, approval of this waiver would also allow the PRDE the flexibility needed to provide support to schools. PRDE is actively supporting schools providing internet access and devices to teachers and students.

To comply with all requirements, PRDE provided this document for comments to the Technical Advisory Committee and integrated some changes based on their recommendations. In accordance to federal regulations, the PRDE has provided the public with notice and a reasonable opportunity to comment and provide input on this request. We have received communications from PRDE teachers, expressing that they support the Agency's determination to request this waiver, among other information, and we have taken them into consideration for this submission.

Thank you for your consideration of this request, which is so important to thousands of school children in Puerto Rico. If you have any questions regarding this request, please contact María De Los A. Lizardi Valdés, Interim Auxiliary Secretary of Federal Affairs, at 787-773-2003 or lizardi_m@de.pr.gov or Daisy Hernández at hernandezgd@de.pr.gov. Thank you in advance for your continued support.

Sincerely,


Elba L. Aponte Santos
Designated Secretary