

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

COMMITTEES:
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SELECT COMMITTEE ON INTELLIGENCE
SMALL BUSINESS AND ENTREPRENEURSHIP
SPECIAL COMMITTEE ON AGING

October 15, 2018

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

Dear Secretary DeVos:

Thank you for your continued leadership in response to Hurricane Michael. Your department's efforts are critical to ensuring a rapid, effective response to this disaster.

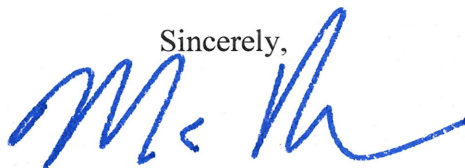
Even though the damage is still being assessed, it is abundantly clear that this storm and recovery will have a tremendous impact on our students, their families and our school system. As the State of Florida is in the very early stages of recovery, I request that your team be ready to assist the state when they are prepared to apply for assistance available.

To date, the school districts in nine counties are closed – most until further notice – and multiple institutions of higher education announced full or partial closures. Some of these local schools are still being used as temporary shelters and others have had buildings completely destroyed. This will undoubtedly exhaust resources of the local school districts impacted by the storm, as well as schools that enroll displaced students, and it could have consequential effects on students' education if necessary steps are not taken immediately. While the recovery efforts will span across multiple federal, state and local entities, I implore your department to take all available steps to help these communities recover.

In previous disaster recoveries, Project SERV grants were critical to recovery efforts. I ask that the department proactively assist K-12 and postsecondary institutions seeking assistance through Project SERV grants, and that the department expedite the review of all applications from education entities in Florida counties devastated by Hurricane Michael. The use of the grants can include, among other things, mental health services, overtime for teachers and counselors, as well as transportation and other costs to operate the school at an alternate site. This is why I also ask the department to be a resource to state and local officials so schools are prepared with the necessary information when submitting their grant application. Quickly approving Project SERV applications and providing maximum resources available will allow for these students and schools to recover as soon as possible.

Thank you for your prompt attention to this request. I look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,



Marco Rubio
U.S. Senator