



LOUISIANA DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

March 28, 2017

Ms. Lynette Fontenot, Chairperson
Governor's Advisory Council on Disability Affairs
1201 North Third Street, Suite G-219
Baton Rouge, LA 70802

Dear Ms. Fontenot:

Thank you for your letter regarding the submission of Louisiana's ESSA state plan to the U.S. Department of Education for review and approval.

For nearly one year, the Louisiana Department of Education (LDE) has been working with stakeholders to develop Louisiana's plan, holding 136 [meetings](#) across the state with hundreds of educators, school leaders, parents, advocates, business and industry leaders, postsecondary education representatives, policymakers, and formal advisory councils. The following groups that advocate on behalf of students with disabilities have been a part of those conversations: Audubon Behavioral Health, Bayou Land Families Helping Families, Deaf Focus, Dyslexia Society of South Louisiana, Families Helping Families of Acadiana, Families Helping Families of Greater Baton Rouge, Families Helping Families of Jefferson, Families Helping Families – Region 7, Louisiana Assistive Technology Center, Louisiana Autism Spectrum and Related Disabilities, Louisiana Commission of the Deaf, Louisiana Developmental Disabilities Council, Louisiana Hands and Voices, Louisiana Psychological Association, Louisiana School Psychologists Association, Louisiana Special Education Center, Northshore Families Helping Families, Pyramid Community Parent Resource Center, Southern Poverty Law Center, Special Olympics, Special Education Advisory Panel, Special School District, and Strengthening Outcomes with Autism Resources.

Additionally, LDE Special Education Policy Director Jamie Wong held five regional Special Education Community Meetings this month to discuss opportunities for students with disabilities in Louisiana's ESSA plan. Those meetings were held in Monroe, Gonzales, Lafayette, Alexandria, and Baton Rouge. They were attended by representatives from local school districts, charter schools, and organizations that assist and advocate on behalf of children with disabilities and their families. A copy of the presentation used in these meetings can be viewed [here](#). Detailed information on ESSA stakeholder consultation can be found at www.louisianabelieves.com/essa.

Throughout these many conversations, the LDE has indicated its intent to submit Louisiana's state plan for federal review and approval by the beginning of the 2017-2018 school year in order

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to provide educators with clarity about expectations and how their school's performance will be measured. The plan includes a greater emphasis than ever before on ensuring that all children, including subgroups that have historically been underserved, have equitable access to a quality education and receive the supports that they need to reach their full potential.

In your letter you specifically mentioned the growth factor and the school quality indicator. Information about the growth factor and the Interests and Opportunities (school quality) indicator can be found on pages 27-33 of the [draft state plan](#). In addition, slides 13-14 of the [presentation](#) used at the Special Education Community Meetings address the growth factor.

On Wednesday, March 29, the State Board of Elementary and Secondary Education (BESE) will consider whether to direct the Louisiana Department of Education (LDE) to seek federal input on the state's plan. Only after another three months will BESE consider policy on this subject. During policy adoption process there will be additional opportunities for stakeholders to engage in dialogue and provide formal feedback. We are committed to continuing to work with you and other advocates for children with disabilities as Louisiana's plan is finalized and implemented to more effectively serve children across our state.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "John White".

John White
State Superintendent of Education

cc: Honorable Members of the State Board of Elementary and Secondary Education

Governor's Advisory Council on Disability Affairs

1201 N. 3rd Street, Suite G-219, Baton Rouge, La 70802

March 23, 2017

Transmitted via Email

Superintendent John White and BESE Members:

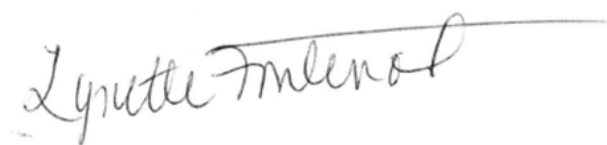
At their March 21, 2017 meeting, the Governor's Advisory Council on Disability Affairs (GACDA) heard an update on the recommendations from the Governor's Advisory Council on ESSA regarding the submission of Louisiana's Plan. GACDA members voted to submit this correspondence to you as a formal request to delay the submission of Louisiana's ESSA Plan until the September submission date.

Our members believe that a September submission will allow additional time for both BESE and the LDOE to seek, consider, and incorporate more authentic stakeholder input into the Plan. GACDA believes the inclusion of stakeholder input into the Plan is especially critical in those areas most directly affecting students with disabilities: the weight of the growth factor in the accountability formula and the weight and composition of School Quality Indicators. Our Council noted that the four informational meetings on the effect of the ESSA Plan on students with disabilities are only now being held; we recognize the need for school districts, parents, self-advocates, and advocates to study and provide input into the information now being disseminated before a Plan is submitted.

Finally, GACDA is requesting that the LDOE and BESE provide written justification for stakeholder input which is not included in Louisiana's Plan, in a manner which mirrors the process followed by the federal government during every reauthorization of IDEA: the comments to the revised regulations describe stakeholder input received on each section and then provide a justification why the input was not incorporated into the final regulations.

Thank you in advance for your consideration of our request and for your willingness to carefully consider all stakeholder input from educators, administrators, parents, self-advocates, and advocates for our students with disabilities.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Lynette Fontenot". The signature is written in a cursive style and is positioned above the printed name.

Lynette Fontenot
Chairperson