

Congress of the United States
Washington, D.C.

October 27, 2021

The Honorable Miguel Cardona
Secretary
U.S. Department of Education
400 Maryland Ave., SW
Washington, DC 20202

Dear Secretary Cardona,

We write regarding the Fiscal Year 2021 Labor, Health and Human Services, and Education appropriations bill which included \$10 million within the Fund for the Improvement of Post-Secondary Education (FIPSE) to support rural students in accessing and completing post-secondary education and training. Since the Department of Education must make awards under the Rural Postsecondary and Economic Development Grant Program by December 31, 2021, we encourage you to issue a Notice Inviting Applications (NIA) as soon as possible.

The Rural Postsecondary and Economic Development Grant Program is intended to provide competitive grants to institutions of higher education and other public and private non-profit organizations to support innovative approaches to improve rates of postsecondary enrollment and completion among rural students. Initiatives funded under this program will foster long-term success by enhancing college and career advising and exposure opportunities for rural students, while developing career pathways aligned to high-skill, high-wage or in demand industry sectors and occupations in the region. Longstanding barriers often make it difficult for rural students to pursue an education beyond high school, and as a result, rural communities suffer from lower degree attainment levels and shortages of skilled workers. The challenges presented by COVID-19 have only made these barriers more formidable and many of our rural students cannot afford to wait any longer.

With this new FIPSE funding opportunity, we can make a difference and provide rural communities with the crucial resources they need. All students deserve an opportunity to develop the skills and credentials necessary to secure a family-sustaining job, regardless of what part of the country they live in.

We look forward to hearing an update on a timeline of when the NIA will be issued and when we can expect awards to be made. Thank you for your efforts and attention to this important matter.

Sincerely,



Elise M. Stefanik
Member of Congress



Josh Harder
Member of Congress