



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

OFFICE OF ELEMENTARY AND SECONDARY EDUCATION

August 8, 2023

Ryan Tangen
Director of Finance and Operations
Buffalo-Hanover-Montrose Schools
214 1st Ave., NE
Buffalo, MN 55313

Dear Mr. Tangen:

Thank you for submitting to the U.S. Department of Education (the Department) your request for an exception to the requirement that Buffalo-Hanover-Montrose Schools maintain equity in one of its high-poverty schools in fiscal year (FY) 2022.

Section 2004(c)(2) of the American Rescue Plan Act of 2021 specifies that a local educational agency (LEA) need not maintain equity if the LEA “demonstrates an exceptional or uncontrollable circumstance, such as unpredictable changes in student enrollment or a precipitous decline in the financial resources of [the LEA], as determined by the Secretary.” An “exceptional or uncontrollable circumstance” might include, for example, increased one-time expenditures in the baseline year (school year 2020-2021) due to the pandemic; a very small school where the maintenance of equity calculations do not result in meaningful information about resource availability; or a significant change in the expenses of a school that no longer serves a student whose educational and support needs required services that have a particularly high cost. Each request for an exception requires a case-by-case review by the Department.

On March 14, 2023, the Department received your request for an exception to the maintenance of equity requirement in FY 2022 for one of your high-poverty schools: Parkside Elementary. According to the materials you provided, while Buffalo-Hanover-Montrose Schools realized an enrollment loss of 369 students during the 2020 and 2021 school years combined and an additional loss of 72 students in 2022, Parkside Elementary had a slight enrollment gain during that period. The district-wide loss of enrollment coupled with the increase in Parkside Elementary made it difficult for the LEA to accurately budget for and maintain its per-pupil expenditures.

After reviewing your request, we concur that the volatility of enrollment in Buffalo-Hanover-Montrose Schools constitutes an exceptional or uncontrollable circumstance that prevents Parkside Elementary from meeting the fiscal equity requirement in FY 2022. As a result, Buffalo-Hanover-Montrose Schools may exclude Parkside Elementary from the local maintenance of equity requirements for FY 2022.

Thank you again for reaching out to the Department and for your ongoing commitment to maintaining equity. If you have any questions, please contact the Minnesota State mailbox at: Minnesota.OESE@ed.gov.

Sincerely,

Laura Jimenez

Laura Jimenez
Director, Office of State and Grantee Relations

CC: The Honorable Willie Jett, Commissioner of Education, Minnesota Department of Education