May 13, 2014

TO: Chief School Administrators
    Charter School Lead Persons

FROM: Rochelle Sinclair, Director
      Office of School Improvement

SUBJECT: Opportunity to Comment on Waiver Request

The New Jersey Department of Education (NJDOE) offers an opportunity to provide comment regarding a waiver request to the United States Department of Education (USDE) for an extension of the availability of funds with regard to New Jersey’s School Improvement Grants.

School Improvement Grants (SIG), authorized under section 1003(g) of Title I of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 (ESEA), are grants to state educational agencies (SEAs) that SEAs use to make competitive sub-grants to local educational agencies (LEAs) that demonstrate the greatest need for the funds and the strongest commitment to use the funds to provide adequate resources in order to raise substantially the achievement of students in their lowest-performing schools.

Under section 421(b) of the General Education Provisions Act (GEPA) (the “Tydings Amendment”), FY 2010 SIG funds must be obligated by September 30, 2014. The NJDOE has requested to waive this to extend the period of availability of FY2010 carryover school improvement funds for the SEA and applicable LEAs to September 30, 2015.

This amendment, if approved, would apply to an LEA with one or more Tier I or II SIG schools that began fully implementing a SIG intervention model at the start of the 2011–2012 school year (Cohort 2). Such an LEA that is interested in implementing the extended waiver would need to request and receive New Jersey’s permission to implement it.
New Jersey seeks this extended waiver because it will allow LEAs with Cohort 2 SIG schools to fully utilize FY 2010 funds to continue implementing their improvement plans. Additional time to expend the funds will allow LEAs to further build school-level leadership capacity and prepare teachers to deliver quality instruction. Additionally, students will be afforded additional instructional time to assist them in meeting the demands of an academically rigorous curriculum. New Jersey believes that the additional time to expend the funds is in the public interest and will enable qualifying LEAs to ensure that their Cohort 2 schools are able to use remaining FY 2010 SIG funds to support continued full and effective implementation of selected SIG intervention models for one additional year.

LEAs and the public may comment on this request at our Title I web site at http://www.state.nj.us/education/grants/nclb/waiver/. The NJDOE will submit copies of comments received after the comment period closes on June 14, 2014.