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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

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MSDE Launches New Website Dedicated to COVID Fiscal Transparency

Reporting of Federal Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief (ESSER) Funding Enhances Public Understanding of Maryland School District Spending

BALTIMORE, MD (June 27, 2022) – As part of its commitment to fiscal stewardship and transparency, the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) announced today the online publication of Local Education Agency (LEA)-reported spending of federal Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief Fund (ESSER) pandemic resources: <https://www.marylandpublicschools.org/about/Pages/OFPOS/ESSER/index.aspx>. The website contains data and information about federal revenue, contextualizes the amount of federal revenue with other State and Local LEA spending, provides visualizations of the amount of pandemic funding each LEA has spent, to date, by category, and includes an option to download source data files.

The U.S. Department of Education’s distribution of ESSER funds allows LEA spending and performance reporting through 2024. Data trends indicate that Maryland LEAs are spending relief funds at the pace expected, challenging claims that school districts are not spending resources fast enough. LEAs are spending the earliest funds received first with more than 90% of Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security Act (CARES) ESSER funds now spent.

“MSDE recognizes how COVID relief funds have been instrumental in sustaining Maryland schools through the pandemic and recovery. District spending reflects an intent focus on safe, full-time, in-person instruction, emotional and social health supports, and the acceleration of student learning and achievement,” said State Superintendent of Schools Mohammed Choudhury. “Strategic, deliberate planning is required to deploy these federal resources in the most effective way. Doing so requires a measured implementation process, which Maryland’s LEAs are working diligently to ensure.”

ESSER spending trends to date show that initial spending by LEAs, on average, focused on non-personnel costs related to personal protective equipment (PPE), student devices and wi-fi connectivity. ESSER II and ESSER III funding, in contrast, has, on average, shifted toward personnel-related costs to directly support academic and behavioral health interventions that address learning loss and accelerate student learning. Funds used to support personnel costs include stipends and additional pay for teachers providing tutoring interventions, staff costs for extended day and summer learning activities, and janitorial and custodial salaries, essential in keeping learning environments safe. LEAs also broadly invested some ESSER resources to jumpstart Blueprint-related work.

MSDE will continue to update the website and include more resources and context to detail how Maryland LEAs progress in their work to implement their ESSER plans and spend funds accordingly.

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