



# STATE OF CONNECTICUT

## STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION



TO: Superintendents of Schools

FROM: Dr. Miguel A. Cardona, Commissioner of Education *MAC*

DATE: January 13, 2020

SUBJECT: Puerto Rico Earthquakes and Displaced Students

Our hearts go out to the people and island of Puerto Rico as we hope and pray for their safety and speedy recovery from the damage caused by the recent earthquakes. The people of Puerto Rico have shown their resilience many times over and we will do our part to ensure they have what they need to rebuild and establish some normalcy.

Many of us in Connecticut's vibrant Puerto Rican community have family on the island and, much like in the aftermath of Hurricane Maria, we expect families to relocate to our state. While the CSDE fully comprehends the unexpected challenge faced by districts in the form of unanticipated additions to their enrollment counts, we must also remember our obligation to the educational rights of any student residing in our towns and cities. We must also remember that these children have experienced trauma that will require supports around Social Emotional Learning.

As an agency, CSDE stands ready to assist districts as they enroll students who were displaced by the earthquakes by providing any guidance and programmatic technical assistance that may be required, such as training in trauma-informed education and best strategies for supporting new students who are English learners. We will also work closely with the Governor's office, the legislature, and members of Connecticut's congressional delegation to identify and advocate for state and federal funding to ensure districts will be able to obtain the fiscal support – as it becomes available – in order to cover the costs of serving and educating this new population.

We know the students displaced from Puerto Rico will only contribute to the strength and diversity of our public schools. We will continue being responsive to and working closely with districts across our state to make sure they are able to best provide a welcoming learning environment and support to these new students.

As the implications of the earthquakes unfold, district leaders will receive resources from CSDE on best practices for providing support to students who have become displaced and relocated to Connecticut. In the meantime, we will coordinate with our state and federal partners and make our staff available to provide guidance and technical assistance. For assistance with navigating federal agencies, districts should contact Senator Richard Blumenthal's office at (860) 258-6940 and Senator Chris Murphy's office at (860) 549-8463.

At CSDE, districts can receive technical assistance and guidance regarding trauma-informed education by contacting Kim Traverso at (860) 807-2057 and [kimberly.traverso@ct.gov](mailto:kimberly.traverso@ct.gov). Guidance on language services, as well as best strategies for supporting students who are English learners, are also available by contacting Megan Alubicki Flick at (860) 713-6786 and [megan.alubicki@ct.gov](mailto:megan.alubicki@ct.gov).

Thank you for all that you do to support our students and families.