



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

January 4, 2021

MEMORANDUM

TO: Lindsay Abate
Office of Management and Budget Desk Officer

FROM: Christopher McCaghren *CCM*
Deputy Assistant Secretary for Higher Education Programs

RE: Emergency request for Paperwork Reduction Act (PRA) approval

Pursuant to the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) procedures established at 5 CFR 1320, the U.S. Department of Education (the Department) requests that the following collection of information, Improper Payments Information Form, be processed in accordance with section 1320.13 Emergency Processing. The Department has determined that this information must be collected prior to the expiration of time periods established under Part 1320, and that this information is essential to the Department's ability to effectively implement the CARES Act, Pub. L. No. 116-136 (March 27, 2020) and address the economic disruption posed by the Novel (new) Coronavirus ("2019-nCoV").

Under the CARES Act's Higher Education Emergency Relief Fund (HEERF), the Department has made over 12,000 awards to institutions of higher education (IHEs) to support emergency financial aid to students and institutional costs associated with significant changes to the delivery of instruction due to the coronavirus. In the course of monitoring these grant awards, the Department has determined that over 700 IHEs have improperly drawn down funds from their award accounts, totaling over \$202 million in funds that must now be returned. Furthermore, during the time that these funds have been drawn down, grantees are earning additional interest in excess of the \$500 annual cap prescribed by 2 CFR § 200.305(b) of the Uniform Guidance. The Department is concerned that this excess interest, without an expeditious inventory and response by our grantees, may be difficult to account. Therefore, in order to process the return of these funds more efficiently and prevent any further earnings beyond the interest cap, we are requesting approval of a short form that will allow the grantee to provide the Department with information regarding the funds being returned.

If this emergency collection is not approved, the Department will lack critical information about these refunds, jeopardizing our ability to responsibly monitor the use of these funds. Given the short timeframe, the Department is unable to consult with the public prior to issuing the form. However, the Department has ample experience designing other similar

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forms in a way that is clear and minimizes burden. We estimate that the form will require 1 hour to complete.

The Department requests approval of the submission by January 13, 2021. Given the inability to seek public comment during such a short timeframe for this emergency collection, the Department will also provide 60-day language as part of the notice in the Federal Register seeking public comment for the regular information collection.