

**Higher Education Emergency Relief Fund (HEERF)
Voluntary Decline of Higher Education Emergency Relief Funds Form (1840-0856)
Summary of Public Comments Following 60 Day Review Period**

Summary:

On May 28, 2021, the Department of Education (Department) published a Notice of Proposed Emergency Information Collection Request (Notice) in the Federal Register inviting comments by July 27, 2021, on the Higher Education Emergency Relief Fund (HEERF) Voluntary Decline Form. One comment was submitted regarding this collection.

Comments:

1. This rule would allow institutions to deny their students access to fund and urge consideration that institutions be required to verify they are internally supplementing financial support.
2. Commend the Agency on the expedited action taken to ensure vulnerable students receive vital support in this time of need with hopes of continued investment into students pursuing their higher educational goals.
3. Moving forward, request the Agency considers implementing sustainable measures in addition to the CARES Act.

Response:

The Department has reviewed the comments. As a result, the Department reiterates the purpose of the Voluntary Decline Form is to ensure students and institutions with the greatest needs have access to funds as the Department seeks to better manage the funds appropriated by the U.S. Congress due to COVID-19, a national emergency.

Institutions of higher education (IHEs) determine whether the Federal funds are needed to support the continuation of educating students during this national emergency, while the Department determines how best to utilize funds that are not otherwise needed by some IHEs. The Voluntary Decline Form does not encourage IHEs to return funds as is reflected in the title. Rather, it helps with effective planning for any unused funds by the Department of Education. Further, the Voluntary Decline Form is one of the sustainable measures implemented because of CARES Act funding provided to IHEs as support and assistance during the emergency.

No changes have been made to the form based on the comments received.