



Karen B. Salmon, Ph.D.
State Superintendent of Schools

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TO: Members of the State Board of Education

FROM: Karen B. Salmon, Ph.D., State Superintendent of Schools

DATE: September 19, 2017

SUBJECT: Prince George's County Public Schools Performance Audit

PURPOSE:

The purpose of this item is to provide the State Board of Education with an update on the Prince George's County Public Schools Performance Audit.

BACKGROUND

Based on allegations of grade manipulation to alter/increase promotion and graduation rates, MSDE issued an emergency procurement for an independent performance audit of Prince George's County Public Schools (PGCPS) graduation rates. The Request for Proposals (RFP) was issued on July 10, 2017. Five firms responded to the RFP, and a notice to proceed was provided to Alvarez and Marsal (A&M) on August 29, 2017.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

The RFP requires the selected firm to address a minimum of ten specific items designed to investigate the allegations of grade manipulation to alter or increase graduation rates. The firm is required to review all allegations received prior to the start of the contract as well as any that arise during the term of the contract. Each member of the Prince George's County School Board must be interviewed along with Government officials, PGCPS Staff and any other individuals that may be aware of and provide perspective regarding the allegations. The firm will evaluate the protocols for certifying students for graduation including assessing the accuracy of recordkeeping, and the procedures for securing student records. The firm must include all PGCPS high schools in its analysis and based on a random sample of 12th grade students in the two prior school years, determine if grades were changed and if high school graduates satisfied the graduation requirements.

The proposal submitted by A&M included a well-thought-out approach to each component of the RFP. A&M's proposal includes a detailed plan for analyzing student-level data, which will be conducted by digital forensics investigators. The firm has had experience investigating similar claims in Washington, DC and in Colorado. The firm is in the process of assessing the information available, scheduling interviews and accessing the necessary data. The RFP calls for weekly progress updates, an interim report in mid-September, and a final report, due on October 31, 2017.

ACTION:

No action required, for discussion only.