



State of New Jersey
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
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Governor

SHEILA Y. OLIVER
Lt. Governor

ANGELICA ALLEN-McMILLAN, Ed.D.
Acting Commissioner

June 29, 2021

Ms. Lola Szobota, Executive Co-Chair
New Jersey Science Convention
5 Cypress Circle,
Morristown, NJ 07960

Dear Ms Szobota:

The New Jersey Department of Education (NJDOE) is in receipt of your letter submitted on behalf of the New Jersey Science Education Leadership Association (NJSELA) and the New Jersey Science Teachers Association (NJSTA), joint sponsors of the New Jersey Science Convention, requesting a waiver of the prohibition on overnight travel in order to facilitate the hosting of the Forty-Fifth Annual New Jersey Science Convention planned for October 19 and 20, 2021, in Princeton, New Jersey.

As you are aware, *N.J.S.A. 18A:11-12* requires that boards of education must ensure that all school district travel expenditures are "in compliance with state travel payment guidelines as established by the Department of the Treasury..." *N.J.A.C. 6A:23A-7.11(b)* and State Department of the Treasury OMB Circular 16-11 Section X.B specifically prohibit reimbursement of in-state overnight travel. However, the circular and *N.J.A.C. 6A:23A-7.11(c)* authorize the Commissioner to grant overnight in-state travel waivers only in extremely limited circumstances, where the sponsoring organization can demonstrate that the conference is broad and multidisciplinary in scope, comprised of content-rich educational programming with important professional development opportunities and/or required training. In addition, the sponsoring organization must demonstrate that the conference's content, structure, scheduling, and anticipated attendance necessitate that it be held on multiple consecutive days with overnight lodging. The travel regulations are posted on the [NJDOE's website](#).

Pursuant to the regulations, waivers will not be granted for reimbursement of lodging prior to the first day of the event or after check-out time of the last day of the event. Moreover, waivers will be considered only where the sponsoring organization can demonstrate that the conference is broad and multidisciplinary in scope, comprised of content-rich educational programming with important professional development opportunities and/or required training. In addition, the sponsoring organization must demonstrate that the conference's content, structure, scheduling and anticipated attendance necessitate that it be held on multiple consecutive days with overnight lodging.

After carefully reviewing your submission, the NJDOE finds that the Forty-Fifth Annual New Jersey Science Convention planned for October 19 & 20, 2021, meets the criteria of the regulations. Specifically, based upon the content of your submission, the agenda planned for October 19 and 20 will

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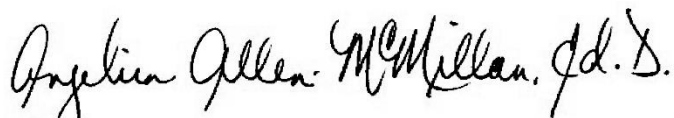
provide timely and relevant programming, professional development, and educational programs to school personnel covering important topics and new regulations. For this reason, a waiver request for the Forty-Fifth Annual New Jersey Science Convention is granted. Because of this waiver, school districts, charter schools, and renaissance school projects will be able to reimburse eligible attendees for overnight lodging on **October 19, 2021** only, provided that the remaining conditions delineated in this letter are met.

Reimbursement for registration fees, mileage and meals, subject to the limitations and conditions set forth in OMB Circular 16-11 and OMB Circular 11-09, may also be permissible. School districts, charter schools, and renaissance school projects should ensure that they approve attendance only of board members, trustees, and employees whose duties are related to the purposes of the conference or who are required to attend to meet continuing education requirements as a condition of continued employment.

Moreover, please be advised that the waiver of the prohibition for reimbursement for overnight lodging covers only those attendees whose home to event commute exceeds 50 miles. In other words, only those individuals whose one-way commute to the Annual New Jersey Science Convention in Princeton, NJ, exceeds 50 miles may obtain reimbursement from their school district, charter school or renaissance school project for overnight lodging for **October 19, 2021**.

The Department reminds L.E.A.D. that the State of New Jersey is currently in the midst of a public health emergency, and that as such, the Governor's Executive Orders set forth requirements regarding gatherings and events, and federal, state, and local authorities have issued guidance regarding appropriate public health recommendations to mitigate the spread of COVID-19. This letter does not constitute a waiver of those requirements or comment on the wisdom of holding a public event. To that end, please note that New Jersey Science Convention must comply with any Executive Orders in effect at the time of this conference, and it is recommended that the organization work with the host of the event and the local public health authority to ensure they remain in compliance and promote the safety and wellbeing of all attendees.

Finally, I want to express my appreciation for the effort of the NJSELA and the NJSTA to provide professional development opportunities to those who strive to provide quality public education in New Jersey. My best wishes for a successful conference.



Angelica Allen-McMillan, Ed.D.
Acting Commissioner

AAM/KD/mp

c: Senior Staff

Executive County Superintendent