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March 1, 2023

The Honorable Gavin Newsom
Governor, State of California
1021 O Street, Suite 9000
Sacramento, CA 95814

The Honorable Nancy Skinner, Chair
Senate Budget Committee
1020 N Street, Room 502
Sacramento, CA 95814

The Honorable Phil Ting, Chair
Assembly Budget Committee
1021 O Street, Suite 8230
Sacramento, CA 95814

The Honorable John Laird, Chair
Senate Budget Sub. 1 Committee
1020 N Street, Room 502
Sacramento, CA 95814

The Honorable Kevin McCarty, Chair
Assembly Budget Sub. 2 Committee
1021 O Street, Suite 8230
Sacramento, CA 95814

Re: ACSA's Response to Governor's Proposed TK-12 Education Budget

On behalf of the Association of California School Administrators (ACSA) and our more than 17,000 members, we appreciate the Governor's commitment to California's children and public education as reflected in the Governor's budget. We are grateful to see the continued commitment to the Local Control Funding Formula and the transformative whole-child programs created over the last few years.

Schools are working hard to support children's academic social-emotional needs as we grapple with our "new normal" and shift from pandemic to endemic. Maintaining fiscal stability through the next few years is critical to ensure students have access to essential core academics and programs that support their success outside the classroom.

Local Control Funding Formula (LCFF)

ACSA supports the proposed 8.13% statutory cost of living adjustment (COLA) in the LCFF. Inflation has soared over the last year along with mandatory costs such as salaries, pensions, and healthcare. The proposed COLA is key to retaining and recruiting staff and balancing rising school costs. Further, ACSA applauds the Governor for extending the COLA to programs outside the LCFF including County Offices of Education, adult education, and nutrition, among others. These are all critical programs that are grappling with the same cost pressures as school districts.

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Block Grant Redirection

ACSA is concerned to see the proposed redirection of the Arts, Music, and Instructional Materials Discretionary Block Grant. We understand the revenue situation the state is in, but are concerned to see funds that were committed to and partially released be redirected. Many districts have already committed these funds, many within local bargaining agreements. This redirection will be a major source of consternation at the local level and divert educators' attention at a time when it is essential to be focused on students. Further, Proposition 28 and the block grant funds have drastically different allowable expenditures and districts will not be able to swap out block grant funds with Proposition 28 funds. Lastly, without prejudice to the literacy coaches and art and cultural enrichment proposals, new programs should not be created when retroactive cuts are being proposed. ACSA urges the Legislature and Governor to restore the block grant to the full amount adopted in the 2022 Budget Act.

Special Education

ACSA supports the Governor's proposed 8.13% COLA to special education. This investment is critical as the percentage of California students being referred for special education continues to increase despite overall enrollment decreases.

ACSA is, however, opposed to the Governor's proposal to restrict Special Education Local Plan Areas (SELPA) spending and distribution of funds. The proposal unnecessarily restricts local control. Given the significant decline in enrollment California has seen over the last few years, coupled with population shifts across the state, we are concerned the proposal will have unintended consequences that disrupt student services and destabilize SELPAs. Further, some SELPAs have plans to roll out various policies and local priorities that would be stymied by this proposal.

Equity Multiplier

ACSA is concerned with the equity multiplier proposal. We appreciate the intent to direct resources to the state's highest-poverty schools, however, the state's funding formula already does so through LCFF. We urge the Legislature and Governor to redirect these resources to support the accountability changes proposed.

Accountability System Changes

ACSA appreciates the administration's intent to close the achievement gap and ensure our historically lowest-performing students are making progress. ACSA has a number of questions and concerns about the trailer bill proposed and will provide specific recommendations in the coming weeks.

Transitional Kindergarten (TK)

ACSA appreciates the Governor fulfilling his commitment to rebench the Proposition 98 guarantee providing \$690 million in additional funds to support the next cohort of TK students. School districts do continue to face challenges to finding and upgrading facilities so they are developmentally and age appropriate. ACSA urges the Legislature to increase resources to districts that need to make facilities upgrades or even build new classrooms to support TK students.

ACSA is very concerned about the Governor's proposal to increase educational requirements on paraeducators in TK classrooms in 2028-2029. In no other grade do paraeducators have similar education requirements. These proposed changes would devalue the qualified, skilled paraeducators working in TK settings now. Teachers are required to hold credentials appropriate for delivering instruction to our youngest learners and lead instruction in the classroom. Paraeducators provide support to their classroom teachers, ensuring the full scope of children's needs are met. This proposed policy change is unnecessary and would make it more difficult than it already is to meet TK workforce needs.

Furthermore, teachers are required to have 24 early education units to meet TK qualifications. Given the significant staff shortages across the state, we request an extension of the time for teachers to obtain the required units to teach TK.

Facilities and Infrastructure

ACSA is disappointed to see the reduction to the School Facilities Program and the delay in funding to support full day kindergarten, transitional kindergarten, and preschool facilities. The vast majority of California's schools have aging and crumbling infrastructure. Despite huge numbers of districts facing serious facilities issues, bond dollars have been expended. We urge the Legislature and Governor to put a school facilities bond on the 2024 ballot to meet the current and growing need.

Administrator Shortage

Similar to the teaching shortage, schools are experiencing significant administrator shortages and struggling to fill critical positions. Aspiring administrators are often full time working teachers, with families they have to support. Administrator preparation programs costs thousands of dollars and are often cost prohibitive, particularly for those teachers who have student loan debt. ACSA urges the Legislature and Governor to expand the Golden State Teacher Grant Program to include aspiring administrators, so they can get financial help to pursue their administrative credential.

Thank you for your consideration of our recommendations. We look forward to working with you to identify funding solutions that best serve students, particularly those with the highest needs. Should you have any questions or wish to discuss ACSA's positions outlined above, please contact Megan Baier at mbaier@acsa.org.

Sincerely,



Megan Baier
Legislative Advocate
Association of California School Administrators

cc: Members, Senate Budget and Fiscal Review Committee
Members, Senate Budget and Fiscal Review Subcommittee #1 on Education
Members, Assembly Budget Committee
Members, Assembly Budget Subcommittee #2 on Education
Andrew Medina, Office of Senate President pro Tempore Toni G. Atkins
Yong Salas, Senate Budget and Fiscal Review Committee
Misty Feusahrens, Office of Speaker Anthony Rendon
Erin Gabel, Assembly Budget Committee
Lynn Lorber, Senate Education Committee
Tanya Lieberman, Assembly Education Committee
Ben Chida, Office of Governor Newsom
Nichole Munoz-Murrillo, Office of Governor Newsom
Brooks Allen, State Board of Education
Chris Ferguson, Department of Finance