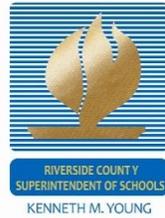




San Diego Unified
SCHOOL DISTRICT



Kern County
Superintendent
of Schools
Office of Christine Lizardi Frazier
...advocates for children



September 23, 2014

The Honorable Darrell Steinberg
Senate President pro Tempore
California State Senate
Room 205, State Capitol
Sacramento, CA 95814

The Honorable Toni Atkins
Speaker of the Assembly
California State Assembly
Room 219, State Capitol
Sacramento, CA 95814

Re: Adequacy of Education Funding in California – Informational Hearings

Dear Senate pro Tem Steinberg and Speaker Atkins:

On behalf of the undersigned local education agencies (LEAs) and statewide education organizations representing school administrators, school board members, county superintendents of schools and school business officials, we are writing to request that the Legislature convene hearings in early 2015 on the adequacy of education funding in California.

When California voters approved Proposition 98 in 1988, two explicit educational goals were added to the State Constitution: first, that annual per-student expenditures would equal or exceed the average annual expenditure per-student of the 10 states across the nation with the highest annual per-student expenditures for elementary and high schools, and second, that average class sizes in California be equal to or less than the average class size of the 10 states with the lowest class sizes for elementary and high schools. It is therefore disturbing, if not tragic, that California is currently ranked 50th in the nation in adjusted per-pupil expenditures for K-12 education in the 2014 *Education Week* Quality Counts Survey. According to the same survey, California's per-student spending of \$8,341 was thirty percent below the national average of \$11,864. Further, according to NEA's *Rankings & Estimates* (March 2014) California had the highest number of students enrolled per teacher in public elementary and secondary schools in Fall 2012, with an average of 25.6 students per teacher – much higher than the national average of 16. It is clear that, by any measurement, California schools are woefully underfunded and understaffed, and our students are not receiving the resources they need to succeed in school.

In recent years, California has taken important steps intended to provide stability, equity and local control to school funding. In 2012, the passage of Proposition 30 allowed schools to avert a fiscal catastrophe by preventing reductions in excess of \$5 billion. However, the passage of Proposition 30 occurred only *after* school districts and county offices of education had *already* suffered reductions in excess of \$10 billion. By enacting the Local Control Funding Formula in 2013, the state made a dual commitment to local decision making and equity in the allocation and expenditure of dollars at the local level, based on student needs and the cost of providing services to meet the unrecognized needs of historically underserved students. We are all committed to ensuring the success of LCFF during its estimated 8-year implementation period, particularly with respect to stakeholder engagement and focusing on the educational needs of students in our diverse communities.

However, it is important to recognize that none of these worthy efforts have addressed the long-term *adequacy* of school funding. While a landmark reform that provides appropriate focus on student outcomes and accountability, LCFF is a distributional formula that does not address the issue of funding adequacy. Even at full LCFF implementation, school districts' base funding won't even be restored to their 2007-08 funding level. But LCFF presents an historic opportunity to create a new paradigm for school funding in California. Fund schools *adequately*, coupled with a robust system of accountability. At the same time, the state should recognize the increases in fixed costs that school districts are facing, such as higher employer contributions for CalSTRS and CalPERS, which threaten to outpace the increased funding schools are receiving during the economic recovery. Another critical component of the conversation are increased costs that are linked with important educational reforms and the increased expectations that come with them – including, but not limited to, the Common Core State Standards, the Smarter Balanced Assessments and the Next Generation Science Standards.

We recognize that an effort of this magnitude will require a multi-year approach and need to explore many options. We also recognize that these discussions will not be easy ones, and that student achievement and closing achievement gaps must be at the heart of any state policy discussion about increasing the funds that are provided to support public schools. However, we believe that the Legislature can make a powerful statement in support of long-term funding adequacy for schools by holding a series of hearings during which past research can be re-examined, approaches adopted by other states can be considered, and new ideas can be discussed. The timing is critical, given the temporary nature of Proposition 30 revenues that have helped immensely to smooth the road that lies ahead for our schools and students. Given this urgency, we strongly encourage you to begin informational hearings in early 2015, and are happy to continue dialogue with you and your staff on this critically important matter.

We look forward to discussing these issues with you in more detail.

Sincerely,



Andrea Ball
Legislative Advocate
Governmental Relations
California School Boards
Association



Adonai Mack
Legislative Advocate
Association of
California School Administrators



Jeffrey A. Vaca
Deputy Executive Director,
Department of Governmental
Relations
California Association of
School Business Officials



Sandra Morales
Assistant Executive Director
California County Superintendents
Educational Services
Association



Leilani Aguinaldo Yee
Legislative Advocate
Los Angeles Unified School
District



Martha Alvarez
Director, Governmental
Relations
San Diego Unified School
District



Michael Hulsizer
Chief Deputy, Governmental Affairs
Kern County Superintendent of
Schools



Patti F. Herrera
Chief Governmental Relations
Officer
Riverside County Superintendent
of Schools
Riverside County School District
Superintendents



Jeff Frost
Legislative Advocate
California Association of
Suburban School Districts



Kevin Gordon
Legislative Advocate
San Diego County Office of
Education



Debra Pearson
Executive Director
Small School Districts' Association



Jeff Frost
Legislative Advocate
Orange County
Department of Education



Janet Young, Ed. D
California School Finance
Reform Coalition
Superintendent, Clovis
Unified School District



George Mannon, Ed. D
California School Finance
Reform Coalition
Superintendent, Torrance
Unified School District



Micah Ali
Board President
Compton Unified
School District



Mark Cerutti
Interim Superintendent
Elk Grove Unified
School District



Priscilla S. Cox
Board President
Elk Grove Unified
School District



Terry Walker
Superintendent
Irvine Unified School
District

cc: Members of the California State Senate
Members of the California State Assembly
Erin Gabel, Consultant, Office of the Senate President pro Tempore
Rick Simpson, Consultant, Speaker's Office
Danny Alvarez, Staff Director, Senate Education Committee
Kathleen Chavira, Principal Consultant, Senate Education Committee
Rick Pratt, Chief Consultant, Assembly Education Committee
Jennifer Troia, Consultant, Senate Budget and Fiscal Review Committee
Katie Hardeman, Consultant, Assembly Budget Committee
Jacqueline Wong-Hernandez, Consultant, Senate Appropriations Committee
Misty Feusahrens, Principal Consultant, Assembly Appropriations Committee
Cheryl Black, Consultant, Senate Republican Caucus
Roger Mackensen, Lead Consultant, Senate Republican Caucus
Bob Becker, Principal Consultant, Assembly Republican Caucus
Amy Rutschow, Fiscal Consultant, Assembly Republican Caucus