

February 3, 2018

Join the Movement: Adopt CSBA's Resolution Calling for Full and Fair Funding of California's Public Schools



California has a reputation as a land of opportunity and creativity, a place where innovation lives and where dreams are made. That reputation was built, in no small part, because this state invested in the public schools that drive its social, economic and civic life. In 1970, when our public schools were the envy of the nation, California funded schools at \$400 per student above the national average — roughly \$2,600 in today's money. California now provides nearly \$2,000 less per pupil than the average state, which ranks us 41st in school funding.

The question we have to ask ourselves is whether 41st place is good enough for California, good enough for our schools or good enough for our 6.2 million students. My answer is emphatically, NO. With that in mind, CSBA has drafted a sample resolution calling on the State Legislature to fund California schools at the national average by 2020, and to the average of the top 10 states by 2025. Yes, this is a bold request, but this state has a history of acting boldly when the need arises.

California has the sixth largest economy in the world and the highest gross domestic product (GDP) of any state — we shouldn't rank 41st in any area of significance, much less education. If we want all children to achieve at high levels — and we say that we do — then we must create conditions that are conducive to success. That starts by giving our schools the resources needed to prepare all students for success in college, career and civic life. If we don't reprioritize public schools, we put the vitality of our communities, the prosperity of our state and our children's future at even greater risk.

California has a high-need student population, with more low-income students than the national average, the most English learners of any state and troubling opportunity and achievement gaps. Yet, we are attempting to educate this population with some of the worst student support ratios in the country. We can and must do better. The fact that California has the largest GDP in the nation indicates the money is there — the fact that we're 45th in the percentage of revenues devoted to schools shows that the effort isn't.

California has countless districts and county offices of education that are doing more with less. The state needs to do its part and provide the resources needed to close opportunity and achievement gaps and provide universal, high-quality education. It's true that money won't solve all our problems, but it can help build the foundation needed to prepare every student for the challenges of an increasingly global, complex and competitive world.

Our collective effort to obtain full and fair school funding will shape California for generations to come. I look forward to your partnership in this most important work.

Sincerely,

Vernon M. Billy,
CEO & Executive Director