



May 16, 2025

The Honorable [First Name, Last Name]
United States [House of Representatives / Senate]
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Representative/Senator [Last Name]:

On behalf of California's 1,000 school districts and county offices of education (COE), the California School Boards Association (CSBA) appreciates your steadfast commitment to ensuring every child has access to a high-quality education. California's locally elected school boards collectively serve more than 5.8 million children and one of every 12 public school students in the United States, so the ongoing budget negotiations have significant implications for the work they perform in the service of students.

As Congress deliberates FY 2025 reconciliation measures and the FY 2026 appropriations cycle, we urge you to protect and, where possible, expand the federal-state partnership supporting academic achievement, student health, school safety, positive life outcomes, and community well-being.

Our requests

1. **Reject proposed Medicaid “community-engagement” mandates**, six-month eligibility redeterminations, higher cost-sharing, Federal Medical Assistance Percentage (FMAP) penalties, and shortened retroactive coverage that would strip health coverage from children and the school-based providers who serve them.
2. **Oppose new or expanded work-requirement thresholds and other cuts to the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)** that would restrict children's access to nutritious meals at home and jeopardize participation in the Community Eligibility Provision (CEP) for schools.
3. **Reinstate the \$1 billion School-Based Mental Health Services Grant program** and restore other behavioral-health grants suspended by the U.S. Department of Education.
4. **Extend the Secure Rural Schools (SRS) program through at least FY 2029** and update payment formulas to reflect California's higher cost of living.
5. **Allow states like California to continue developing prudent safeguards for artificial intelligence (AI)** by striking the 10-year federal pre-emption proposed in Subtitle C, which would hamper responsible AI use and student-data privacy.
6. **Preserve core K-12 formula programs in Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) Titles I & IV-A/F at no less than FY 2024 levels** to avoid disrupting targeted services for the highest-need students.

7. **Fulfill the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) promise** by creating a defined path to the statutory 40 percent federal share by FY 2030.
8. **Maintain ESSA Title II educator-quality grants**, expand teacher-residency programs, and authorize housing tax credits for educators to strengthen the workforce pipeline.

Why these actions matter

Medicaid and school health: Proposed eligibility filters such as 80-hour monthly work requirements, six-month renewals, and a 10 percent FMAP penalty, could remove coverage from an estimated 330,000 California children, eliminating more than \$190 million in annual school-based Medicaid reimbursements needed for nurses, psychologists, and speech therapists.

SNAP and student nutrition: Raising work thresholds or shrinking waivers would push tens of thousands of poor families above SNAP cut-offs, eliminating automatic eligibility for free meals and reversing gains in attendance and achievement.

Secure Rural Schools (SRS): Thirty-nine California counties rely on SRS to offset lost property-tax revenue on federal forest lands; lapses result in teacher layoffs, programmatic cuts, deferred maintenance, and other service reductions.

Mental health grants: The sudden suspension of the School-Based Mental Health Services Grant imperils hundreds of counselor and psychologist positions crucial to addressing trauma and youth anxiety during a time of mental health crisis.

AI and student privacy: A decade-long freeze on state regulation of AI would block timely protections against cybersecurity risks and misuse of student data.

Partnership offer

CSBA stands ready to furnish district and COE-level impact statements, cost analyses, and student testimonials. We welcome the opportunity to brief you or your staff, host school-site visits during the August district work period, and collaborate on bipartisan solutions that put students first.

Thank you for considering these requests and for your leadership on behalf of California's children.

Respectfully,



Dr. Bettye Lusk
President, California School Boards Association

cc: [Education Legislative Aide]