



November 19, 2013

The Honorable Edmund G. Brown, Jr.
Governor, State of California
State Capitol
Sacramento, CA 95814

Budget Recommendations

Dear Governor Brown:

I write on behalf of the California School Boards Association (CSBA) to provide the following recommendations as you prepare for the release of your 2014-15 State Budget. CSBA represents close to 1000 school districts and county boards of education. Our members range from districts small and homogeneous to those among the largest and most diverse in the nation. Constant throughout this diversity is the common goal to improve student outcomes and close achievement gaps for the over 6 million public school students in California.

In developing our budget recommendations, we surveyed our association governing body. This letter reflects a summary of the priorities identified by our delegates and directors as well as longstanding budget positions of CBSA. We believe these initiatives complement the goals you have laid out for California's education system and the state.

Increased support for education. Proposition 30 and recent economic indicators have been beneficial for school districts, county offices of education and the overall fiscal health of the state. The additional \$2.6 billion provided in the current fiscal year through Local Control Funding Formula (LCFF) has been critically valuable to schools. However, California remains low in per student state support for education when compared nationally. Ed Source's "*States in Motion*" tables show California at 34th in the nation in per student expenditures and the National Education Association ranks California even lower. The expiration of the Proposition 30 funds is on the horizon as early as 2016. Our members are interested in exploring state efforts to raise additional revenue for schools to increase the investment in students.

Pay down deferrals and fund LCFF. We understand the need for consistency in budgeting for the state and for education. This is especially needed as local education agencies (LEAs) transition to LCFF. We recommend continuing with the direction you laid out in the 2013-14 budget regarding paying down deferrals and funding Local Control Funding Formula (LCFF).

With enactment of the 2013-14 budget, deferrals were reduced from a high of over \$9 billion annually to just over \$5 billion. Continued payoff of these deferrals is critical to the fiscal health of school districts, county offices and the state. We agree with you that deferrals need to be paid off and eliminated. We urge you to continue with your schedule to pay off all deferrals by the end of fiscal year 2016-17.

The budget should provide at least the amount needed for another 1/8 payment to get districts towards their Local Control Funding Formula targets. Districts and counties are engaging stakeholders as they transition to LCFF. To help ensure prudent LEA budgets and maintain public confidence as LCFF is fully implemented, it is crucial for the state to continue its commitment to this major restructuring of school funding.

Provide an additional investment to support local implementation of Common Core State Standards and technology needs. The 2013-14 allocation of \$1.25 billion for Common Core has been vital to local district efforts but more support is needed: the estimate from the California Department of Education is that a total of \$3 billion will be needed to support professional development, technology and software readiness, and other materials. We therefore recommend another allocation of a significant amount for Common Core implementation with the same guidelines for LEAs as in the current year.

Other one-time allocation and augmentation: Mandate backlog and special education.

The mandate claim backlog is estimated at \$4 billion. We recommend using some portion of available one-time funds in 2014-15 for a payment to reduce this backlog.

CSBA members have a longstanding concern with funding for students with disabilities. We urge a cost of living adjustment and, in light of the impact of federal sequestration, a more significant augmentation of state special education funding.

Budget and fiscal policy issues.

Protect integrity of LCFF. We urge you to be vigilant in protecting the integrity of the LCFF and the local governing board authority and accountability it embodies. To advance this effort, we recommend repeal of code sections that, as a result of LCFF, are now unnecessary. The time is opportune to reduce the over 2000 pages of state education statutes.

Local governing board member on California Collaborative for Education Excellence board.

SB 97, the budget trailer bill, included a compromise on the governance structure of the California Collaborative for Education Excellence (CCEE). We recommend that to complete the governance structure, the appointment of a school district governing

board member to the CCEE board should be required. Given the LCFF's reliance on local governing authorities, it seems oddly incomplete to have the CCEE board devoid of this representation.

Necessary Small Schools high school adjustment. The LCFF statutory changes eliminated the adjustment to small unified districts that have only one comprehensive high school. We have heard compelling testimony from a number of small districts on the unintended and dramatic consequences of the loss of this funding. For many of these small communities, the local high school is the civic institution that creates and maintains community identity. Losing the funding adjustment may have repercussions that will jeopardize their school districts and community. We urge you to reconsider the elimination of this funding adjustment.

Regional Occupational Centers and Programs (ROC/Ps). We appreciate the two-year hold-harmless that was included in the final LCFF statute. ROC/Ps have increased significance in light of the role they will have in addressing the LCFF state priorities, particularly in career readiness and student engagement. We look forward to continued policy discussions that will strengthen these key programs while working within the framework of the LCCF.

Thank you for your consideration of these recommendations. CSBA looks forward to working with your administration through the coming budget process.

Please don't hesitate to contact me if you would like additional information. I can be reached by phone at (916) 616-3116 and by e-mail at aball@csba.org.

Sincerely,



Andrea Ball, J.D.
Legislative Advocate

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