



December 20, 2022

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

2023-24 Budget Recommendations

Dear Governor Newsom:

Congratulations on your re-election and thank you for your leadership and support for California's students, their families, and school staff. As leaders of large urban districts representing 20 percent of the state's TK-12 student population, we appreciate your recognition of the lasting impacts of the pandemic and your resolve to accelerate students' academic and social emotional learning. For our part, we have been strategic and intentional in utilizing federal and state pandemic-relief funding to boost instructional time, expand tutoring opportunities, close the digital divide, and expand mental health supports and student engagement efforts.

As your administration makes decisions for the January budget proposal for 2023-24, we write to provide our recommendations to craft a budget that continues to address equity and learning for California's students.

Maintain commitment to Local Control Funding Formula and avoid categorical programmatic funding. The large majority of students in our districts are from low-income families, are dual language learners and are children of color; Significant numbers of our students are in foster care or are homeless. Our children and youth have been the focus of the equity driven Local Control Funding Formula (LCFF). Our communities have been disproportionately impacted by the pandemic. The 2023-24 year will mark 10 years since enactment of LCFF and presents opportunities to take stock and consider improvements while maintaining a commitment to local control and equity. Our diverse school communities and local education partners have also been accustomed to contributing to the decision-making regarding

the prioritization of resources to meet local student needs as part of the Local Control and Accountability Plan (LCAP) discussions. Prioritizing the LCFF for any available ongoing resources respects local decision-making in how funds are used to best serve our students.

In addition, LCFF's ongoing funding is important as districts manage the coming end of multiple one-time COVID-19 relief funds. The support, programs and services established during the pandemic and funded with COVID-19 federal and state dollars continue to be necessary to accelerate academic and social-emotional learning. Ongoing, stable funding is necessary to sustain these programs and support student success.

Fully Fund the Statutory Cost of Living Adjustment (COLA). The LCFF base grant and COLA support the core program for all students, as well as additional programs and services for our English learners, low-income students, and foster youth. With rising inflation and operational costs, the full statutory LCFF COLA is vital to addressing educational and operational costs, including personnel and other expenses that are essential to maintaining quality curricular, cocurricular and extracurricular programs for our students.

Authorize Policies to Address Workforce Shortages. The limited flexibilities authorized during the COVID-19 pandemic to hire retirees without a break in service and exemptions from the earnings cap remain crucially important. Schools across the state and including those in urban areas face steep challenges in filling critical positions. Furthermore, we urge your administration to build on recent state initiatives by crafting longer-term policies to address teacher and administrator pipeline and workforce diversity.

Consider Alternatives to California's Attendance-Based Funding System. Students, their families, and our staff have adapted to and adopted practices initiated during the COVID-19 pandemic to stay home from school when feeling unwell. Keeping our communities healthy remains a priority, while recognizing there are many other challenges outside their control that our students face, which may affect their attendance. In light of these changes, it's time to explore alternatives or supplements to our attendance-based funding system. We offer to partner with your administration to develop funding models to reflect this new reality.

Thank you for your consideration. We stand ready to be a sounding board and a resource to you and your administration.

Sincerely,

Jorge A. Aguilar, Superintendent Sacramento City Unified School District

Jerry Almendarez, Superintendent Santa Ana Unified School District

Jill A. Baker, Superintendent Long Beach Unified School District

Alberto M. Carvalho, Superintendent Los Angeles Unified School District

Dr. Lamont Jackson, Superintendent San Diego Unified School District

Kyla Johnson-Trammell, Superintendent Oakland Unified School District

Robert G. Nelson, Ed. D, Superintendent Fresno Unified School District