



June 8, 2021

The Honorable Gavin Newsom
Governor, State of California
State Capitol, First Floor
Sacramento, CA 95814

The Honorable Toni Atkins
Senate President pro Tempore
State California, Room 205
Sacramento, CA 95814

The Honorable Anthony Rendon
Speaker of the Assembly
State Capitol, Room 219
Sacramento, CA 95814

The Honorable Nancy Skinner
Chair, Senate Budget & Fiscal Review Committee
State Capitol, Room 5019
Sacramento, CA 95814

The Honorable Phil Ting
Chair Assembly Budget Committee
State Capitol, Room 6026
Sacramento, CA 95814

Re: 2021-22 K-12 Budget Recommendations

Dear Governor Newsom, Senate pro Tem Atkins, Assembly Speaker Rendon,
Senator Skinner and Assemblymember Ting:

Thank you for your leadership in crafting a budget to revitalize California public schools as we plan for a new school year. The [California Association of Suburban School Districts](#) (CALSSD) appreciates the deliberation and approach in both the May Revision and the Legislature's budget plan to address challenges and inequities of COVID-19, accelerate student learning and support social emotional learning. As you reach a final budget agreement, here are our recommendations on seven critical issues on which there are differences between the May Revision and the Legislature's budget.

Diversity of California Suburban Schools and How Districts are Addressing Inequity

Suburban schools serve a diverse student population of 2.6 million students in California¹. While almost half of suburban districts serve a student body where more than 55% of students are included in at least one of the state's unduplicated student subgroups, there is great variation among and within districts. In a new [PACE Commentary](#), two CALSSD superintendents reflect on the changing demographics of suburban districts and how the COVID-19 pandemic exposed inequities that schools are taking steps to address. Read their commentary [here](#).

Deferrals. CALSSD supports the legislative proposal to pay down all of the K-12 deferrals in 2022-23. We agree with the Legislative Analyst's comments that paying down deferrals in their entirety makes fiscal sense. Paying off the deferrals would improve district's cashflow and reduce the need for internal or external borrowing. We recognize that some early action on deferral paydown is necessary to avoid potential penalties on districts that have entered arrangements for borrowing.

Local Control Funding Formula (LCFF) Cost of Living Adjustments & Grant Increases

CALSSD appreciates the May Revision and Legislature's adoption of the 4.05% COLA and the 1% increase to the Base Grant. The LCFF base grant was not established at a level sufficient for school districts to meet costs and expense for high quality core program for all students. School districts face rising costs for pension contributions, health care premiums, utilities, transportation, technology, special education services in addition to COVID-19 related expenses. The base grant increase will help districts meet these essential costs and services.

K-12 Pension Contributions. CALSSD supports the legislative budget proposal to provide state funding to mitigate the steep increases in employer rates. The rising costs in pension contributions is one of a number of operational increases districts face and for which base funding is not sufficient. As the Legislative Analyst has noted, use of one-time funding would "smooth out the large increase in pension costs in 2022-23 and/or reduce costs over a longer period. Lower costs would ease local budget pressure and help districts sustain programs over time."

Special Education Funding. CALSSD appreciates and supports the May Revision and the legislature's proposal for the 4.5% COLA for special education and the legislature's proposal to increase the base grant. Special education funding rates vary widely based upon a school district's special education expenditures from the 1990s. This disparity is not primarily the result of differences in populations, but rather is the result of a system in which many areas with historically lower per-pupil rate receive lower funding, despite being held to the same state and federal responsibilities for students with disabilities. CALSSD also supports funding for preschool-age children with disabilities. Districts have the responsibility to serve these children and there has been an increase in the numbers of young children who need these services.

CALSSD also strongly supports the legislature's proposal for using federal funding for special education learning recovery grants. These grants will support local educational agencies in conducting activities to prevent and intervene early in conflicts, conduct voluntary alternative dispute resolution, and provide services to pupils with disabilities relating to impacts to learning associated with COVID-19 school disruptions.

Career Technical Education Incentive Grant. CALSSD supports the legislature's proposal to increase ongoing funding for this grant program by \$150 million a year. Currently, there are almost twice as many high-quality grant applications than there are funds to allocate. The augmentation provided in the legislative version of the budget is important to ensure that more career technical education grants are funded and existing CTE programs can grow as they come up for grant renewal.

Expanded Learning Time Grants. CALSSD supports the legislative proposal to allocate the Expanded Learning Time funds to all districts based on the counts of unduplicated pupils. As noted above, suburban districts are diverse. Virtually all receive supplemental grants and most

serve a significant proportion of students from low income families, English learners, or youth in foster care – the LCFF unduplicated pupil groups. These students have been disproportionately

CALSSD Budget Letter
June 8, 2021
Page 3

impacted by COVID-19, whether or not they attend a school in a district that received concentration grant funding. The allocation of expanded learning time funds to all districts based on unduplicated pupil counts is especially important at the present time; Federal COVID-19 relief funds have in large measure been distributed using the federal Title 1 formula, which is based on historical not current data, thus a number of suburban schools are receiving a smaller share of these funds designed to address the impact of COVID-19.

Independent Study Trailer Bill Language. CALSSD supports strengthening the independent study statutes to ensure that this educational option has the equivalent rigor, quality, and support as in-person programs so that all participating students can achieve academic success while continuing to have the flexibility to learn remotely. The trailer bill language proposed in the May Revise does not accomplish this goal. Given the diversity of students and their experiences during the pandemic, schools are engaging parents and students as they plan instructional programs for the 2021-22 school year. Districts offered in-person instruction in 2020 and the default going forward is in-person, but there continue to be families who want a virtual learning option. Many schools and districts are expanding independent study options to meet capacity needs for these students. We have had informal estimates of up to 20% of families in some districts that may chose virtual learning in summer 2021 and/or the 2021-22 school year.

Thank you for the opportunity to share the recommendations of suburban district leaders. If we can be of further assistance, please contact us via e-mail at andrea@ballfrostgroup.com and jeff@ballfrostgroup.com.

Sincerely,



Andrea Ball
Legislative Advocate
California Association of Suburban
School Districts



Jeffrey Frost
Legislative Advocate
California Association of Suburban
School Districts

ⁱ A [recent report](#) from the [California Education Lab](#) highlights the diversity of students across suburban districts in California: 52% of students are Latinx, 24% are White, 10% are Asian American, 5% are Black or African American, 4% are multi-racial and 3% are Pacific islander or Filipino.