



CCSESA

California County Superintendents Educational Services Association

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February 23, 2017

The Honorable Kevin McCarty
Chair, Assembly Budget Subcommittee No. 2 on Education Finance
State Capitol, Room 2136
Sacramento, CA 95814

Dear Assemblymember McCarty:

On behalf of the California County Superintendents Educational Services Association (CCSESA), I am writing to urge the budget subcommittee to approve ongoing funding for the important work required of county offices of education to support, review and approve school district Local Control and Accountability Plans (LCAPs).

Recognizing the workload of county offices as they support school districts in the LCAP process, the Governor and Legislature appropriated \$40 million in one-time funding to county offices for the 2015-16 and 2016-17 fiscal years. This allocation of \$20 million per year was critical to the ability of county offices to establish teams of high-level staff who could work across fiscal, curriculum and human resource issues with the leadership of every school district in the state. However, this one-time funding is scheduled to end on June 30, just as the new school accountability system is beginning to be fully developed and implemented.

It is clear that the workload to support school districts is increasing dramatically beginning this year, as the new school accountability system is implemented in the form of the revised LCAP template, the evaluation rubrics adopted by the State Board of Education, and the recently launched school accountability dashboard. This system relies on extensive data collected at the state and local levels and reported across various priorities and student groups. Most importantly, the information generated by the data must be connected to the priorities of each school district as reflected in their LCAP, following review and discussion with their parents, staff and community members.

CCSESA's specific proposal is that the \$20 million in one-time funding be converted to ongoing funding and allocated in a manner that will increase support for the lowest-funded county offices. Although progress was made with the enactment of the Local Control Funding Formula (LCFF) in 2013, there remain significant disparities in funding for county offices of education. For this reason, we believe the most appropriate action would be to increase the "target" level of funding for county offices established under LCFF by \$50,000 per school district and \$3 per ADA in the county.

Our estimate is that these adjustments would reflect a significant commitment to the emerging school accountability system, but would increase state funding to county offices by only \$16.8 million—somewhat less than the \$20 million in one-time funding that was allocated for each of the current and past fiscal years. This approach would have the effect of allocating the new state funding to the lowest-funded county offices, while those at higher levels of funding (commonly referred to as "hold harmless" counties) would effectively be expected to utilize a portion of their existing funding to cover the costs of supporting, reviewing and approving school district LCAPs.



Unless these adjustments are made to county office funding, the lowest-funded county offices will simply not have the resources they need to provide the support that the state expects of them in the LCAP and school accountability process. In fact, unless action is taken in the 2017-18 state budget, their support will be reduced from the level provided with the one-time funding, even though the workload is increasing dramatically. Although the more highly-funded “hold harmless” county offices do have the resources to support this workload, current law creates a strong disincentive to adding on-going staff and support structures because it effectively requires them to dismantle those activities in future years to fund all future cost increases. [Under current law, such a county will remain funded at the “hold harmless” level until the “target” reaches that “hold harmless” level through cost-of-living adjustments. This means that anything funded with the additional hold harmless funds will eventually have to be eliminated to pay for cost-of-living adjustments.]

We believe our proposal addresses two critical issues: (1) it provides the meaningful level of support needed for county offices of education to perform the critical support role intended for them in the emerging school accountability system, and; (2) it provides this support in a manner that provides the greatest benefit to the lowest-funded county offices and is less costly in terms of new state funding than the \$20 million per year in one-time funding that was previously appropriated.

Please contact me if I can provide any additional information regarding our recommendation on this important matter.

Sincerely,

Peter Birdsall, Executive Director

cc: The Honorable Rocky Chávez
The Honorable Jacqui Irwin
The Honorable Monique Limón
The Honorable Jose Medina
The Honorable Patrick O'Donnell
The Honorable Randy Voepel
The Honorable Philip Ting
The Honorable Jay Obernolte